

THE BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY & ART OF ANIMATION AND VFX

April
May
2015

ANIMATION MAGAZINE

TM

Teenage-Alien Road Trip!
DreamWorks Heads 'Home'



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**Top Trends
and Can't-Miss
Toons at MIPTV**

**Previews:
Cartoons on the
Bay; FMX; NAB**

**The VFX Magic
of Disney's
'Cinderella'**

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MIPTV SPECIAL

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A delectable dozen of the freshest animated shows on offer at the 2015 MIPTV market.



Cover: Oh and Tip go for a joy ride around the world in DreamWorks Animation's **Home**.

MIPTV Cover: All rights reserved.
Majid Entertainment 2015



Finding the Big Picture

Putting things in perspective is as endlessly enlightening as it is sometimes difficult to do. As much as I know people who work in animation love their jobs and the medium – including those of us who produce this magazine about animation – it often is hard to drop that pencil or close the laptop and step out of our comfort zones and think for a few minutes, hours or even days about the bigger picture.

And that's one of the reasons we're so pumped up about all the great stuff we have cooked up for the months ahead. Start

with this issue, in which we apply the animation perspective to some of the biggest, best, most important and, of course, fun events in the industry. We start with our annual guide to animation at MIPTV, that megamarket by the sea in lovely Cannes, France. If animation is your thing, we've got 12 hot shows to watch, the scoop on the latest trends and a full guide to the market's toon offerings.

Then we continue to travel, heading on to Cartoons on the Bay in Venice, the 20th anniversary of FMX in Germany, the best tech at NAB in Las Vegas and the inevitably hip vibe of Oregon's own Northwest Animation Fest.

We are especially excited to be heading out to these events – I personally will be at MIPTV and Cartoons on the Bay, so be sure to say hello! – because we want as many of our readers and partners as possible to contribute to our next edition, which is our milestone 250th issue! Yes, we've been around for 250 amazing issues, and to celebrate we're asking everyone to help us forecast the 250 creatives, executives, companies, schools, events and projects that will define the future of animation.

Head on over to www.animationmagazine.net/250th for all the details and be sure to speak up. Then, come back for the June 1 release of *Animation Magazine* #250 and all the results. It's going to be big and you don't want to miss out, so renew (or start) your subscription now.

Another thing you won't want to miss is the 2015 edition of The World Animation Celebration international short-film festival, which *Animation Magazine* is presenting Oct. 24-25 along with our pals at Animation Libation Studios at Sony Pictures Animation in Culver City, Calif.

This will be a major showcase for the best animated short films of all types from all over the world. Get more information at www.animationlibationstudios.com.

It's going to be great, so be sure to mark your calendars.

Until next time,

Tom

Tom McLean
Editor
tom@animationmagazine.net

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'Once upon a time there was a freckled-face little boy who told his mom and his dad that one day he was going to work at Walt Disney animation. And they did something amazing; they supported him and they believed him and from the bottom of his heart, he thanks them.'

– Chris Williams, co-director, *Big Hero 6*, on accepting the Oscar for Best Animated Feature.



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Info@animationmagazine.net

President/Publisher: Jean Thoren

Accounting: Jan Bayouth

EDITORIAL

edit@animationmagazine.net

Editor: Tom McLean

Associate Editor: Mercedes Milligan

Webmaster: Steven Dietrich

Asst. Webmaster: Matthew Keable

Tech Reviews Editor: Todd Sheridan Perry

Contributors: Bill Desowitz, Mike de Seve,

Martin Grebing, Charles Solomon

Editorial Intern: Mick Donovan

ADVERTISING SALES

sales@animationmagazine.net

Sheri Shelton

EVENTS

Co-Director: Nancy Bates

nancy@animationmagazine.net

Co-Director: Kim Derevlany

kim@animationmagazine.net

CREATIVE

prod@animationmagazine.net

Art Director/Production Manager

Susanne Rector

CIRCULATION

circ@animationmagazine.net

Circulation Director

Jan Bayouth

TO ADVERTISE:

Phone: 818-883-2884

Fax: 818-883-3773

Email: sales@animationmagazine.net

Website: www.animationmagazine.net

List Rental

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News & Notes

'Big Hero 6,' 'Feast,' 'Interstellar' Win at the Oscars



Disney's *Big Hero 6* won the Best Animated Feature prize at the Academy Awards Feb. 22, the studio's second consecutive win in the category, and its first sweep with Patrick Osborne's *Feast* winning the trophy for Best Animated Short Film.

Meanwhile, Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar* won the Best Visual Effects Oscar for the amazingly photoreal incorporation of physics.

Backstage, *Big Hero 6* directors Don Hall and Chris Williams addressed the challenge of tackling the studio's first Marvel superhero movie and crafting a heartfelt story between the troubled teen and huggable robot Baymax.

Osborne, who continued Disney's technical virtuosity by taking hand-drawn and CG to the next level as a hybrid, discussed the pressures of diving into the very successful shorts program, which has now earned Oscars for *Paperman* as well as *Feast*. ♦

FESTS AND EVENTS

'Dragon 2,' 'Mickey' Dominate 42nd Annual Annie Awards

The big night has come and gone – and it was a good one for DreamWorks Animation's *How to Train Your Dragon 2* and Disney TV Animation's *Mickey Mouse*.

Dragon 2 dominated the feature categories at the Annie Awards ceremony Jan. 31 with six awards, including best animated feature, character animation in a feature film, directing in an animated feature, music in an animated feature, storyboarding in an animated feature and editorial in an animated feature.

Disney's *Mickey Mouse* also won six awards for the night in the animated TV or broadcast categories: directing, music, production design, voice acting, writing and editorial.

Meanwhile, *The Boxtrolls* won two statues, while *The LEGO Movie*, *Big Hero 6* and *The Book of Life* were recognized with one each.

The Simpsons won the best TV/broadcast show honor, while Patrick Osborne's *Feast* took home the award for best animated short.

The full list of winners is available online at <http://bit.ly/167aNQ2>.

FESTS AND EVENTS

VES Awards Go Big for 'Hero 6,' 'Dawn of the Planet of the Apes'

The 13th annual VES Awards went ape for *Apes* and big for *Big Hero 6*.

Dawn of the Planet of the Apes led the live-action feature film categories with three wins at the Feb. 4 ceremony, while Disney's animated feature *Big Hero 6* took home the most awards overall with five.

In TV categories, *Game of Thrones* came out on top, and SSE was the most-honored commercial.

The full list of winners is available online at <http://bit.ly/1OB9nzy>.

FESTS AND EVENTS

Brown Bag Films Tops Inaugural Irish Animation Awards

Brown Bag Films was the big winner at the first Irish Animation Awards, presented March 13 in Dingle, Ireland.

The winners are:

• **Best Animated Preschool Series (up to 6 years):** *Henry Hugglemonster* (Brown Bag Films)

• **Best Animated Short**

Film: *Deadly* (Kavaleer Productions)

• **Best International Short**

Film: *Outlines* (Daisy Gould)

• **Best Writer for a Preschool Animated Series:** Andrew Brenner for *Punky* (Geronimo Productions)

• **Best Writer for an Animated Series:** Trevor J. Colgan for *Roy* (Jam Media)

• **Best Animation for Apps and**

Gaming: *ShipAntics: The Legend of Kiki Beast* (Studio POWWOW)

• **Best Design/Art Direction:** *Bing* (Brown Bag Films)

• **Best Director of an Animated TV**

Series: *Bing* (Brown Bag Films)

• **Best Animation:** Bord Gais

Networks *Tommy McAnairey* (Piranha Bar)

• **Best Music/Sound Design:** *Lily's*

Driftwood Bay (Sixteen South)

• **Best Student Film:** *Wounded* (Julie Rush/BCFE)

• **Kid's Choice Award for Best Animated**

Series: *Brain Freeze* (Kite Entertainment)

• **The Jimmy Murakami Award:** Tomm Moore or Cartoon Saloon

FESTS AND EVENTS

Cartoon Movie Presents 2015 Tributes Winners

With a 17th successful edition in the bag, Cartoon Movie has announced the participant-selected winners of the 2015 Cartoon Tributes – awards for outstanding contributions to the development of European animation over the last year.

This year's winners are:

• **Directors of the Year:** Mark Burton and Richard Starzak for *Shaun the Sheep* (U.K.).

• **Distributor of the Year:** Indie Sales (France), a Paris-based international feature film sales & co-production company specializing in commercial independent projects.

• **Producer of the Year:** TeamTO (France) for *Yellowbird*.

Personality of the Year in Rhone-

Alpes: Patrick Eveno and Mickael Marin for their leadership of the Annecy International Animation Film Festival and the MIFA Market.

FEATURES**DreamWorks Animation Reports 4th Quarter, 2014 Losses**

DreamWorks Animation reported a significant loss in the fourth quarter of 2014 related to its restructuring and to the lackluster box office performance of its features *Penguins of Madagascar* and *Mr. Peabody and Sherman*.

The company took a \$210 million pre-tax charge associated with the restructuring, while the poor performance of *Penguins* and *Peabody* resulted in impairment charges of \$57.1 million.

Revenues for the quarter that ended Dec. 31 were \$234 million, up about 15 percent from the same period in 2013. In addition, DreamWorks Animation reported an adjusted operating loss of \$37.6 million and adjusted net loss of \$64.1 million.

To improve its liquidity, the company sold its Glendale campus for \$185 million in a 20-year lease-back deal.

PEOPLE**Three Top Animation Execs Depart Restructuring Nick**

Three top execs exited Nickelodeon Animation Studio in March: Rich Magallanes, senior VP, current series; Jenna Boyd, senior VP, animation development; and Jill Sanford, VP, animation development.

Magallanes and Boyd both were 18-year veterans at the company; Sanford joined three years ago from Disney TV Animation.

The departures are part of a restructuring effort at Nickelodeon and its parent company, Viacom. Under president of content development and production Russell Hicks, Nick has been promoting more artist-driven projects, establishing programs like the Artists Collective and Writers Fellowship.

The studio also is planning to expand its Burbank facilities with a new five-story building set to be completed next year.

PEOPLE**Belson Named President of Sony Pictures Animation**

Sony Pictures Entertainment has named

Oscar nominee Kristine Belson president of Sony Pictures Animation.

In her new role, Belson will lead the development and production of original material as well as current and future franchises, focusing on creating an environment that nurtures animators and artists.

Belson joins Sony Pictures Animation after spending nearly a decade at DreamWorks Animation, where, most recently, she executive produced *How to Train Your Dragon* and produced *The Croods*, for which she was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature. She joined DreamWorks Animation in 2005 as head of development, where she oversaw the development and acquisition of all feature film projects for the company.

FEATURES**LAIKA to Expand Oregon Studio Space by 70 Percent**

Stop-motion house LAIKA, the Hillsboro, Ore.-based studio behind *The Boxtrolls*, *ParaNorman* and *Coraline*, has announced plans to increase the size of its facility by 70 percent.

The studio, which is headed by Travis Knight (son of Nike co-founder Phil Knight), had been toying with purchasing a new facility but has decided to build on its current 150,000-square-foot renovated warehouse location after finding nothing suitable in the area.

IN BRIEF

Amazon Studios has announced it has commissioned second seasons for *Creative Galaxy* and award-winner *Tumble Leaf*. ... Reel FX and *Book of Life* writer and director Jorge R. Gutierrez have signed a multi-picture deal. The first film will be an untitled kung-fu space western, which Gutierrez will direct from a script he is writing with Douglas Langdale. ... GKIDS will release Aug. 7 the animated feature *Kahlil Gibran's The Prophet* in New York and Los Angeles, followed by expansion to other major markets. ... Shout! Factory Kids will be bringing the CG animated *Maya the Bee Movie* to U.S. theaters in Los Angeles and New York on May 1. ... Director Genndy Tartakovsky announced in an interview that he is no longer working on a *Popeye* feature for Sony Pictures Animation. ... Josh Cooley will be co-director on Pixar's *Toy Story 4* with John Lasseter. ... It's official: There will be a sequel to *Frozen*. The directors of the first film, Jennifer Lee and Chris Buck, and producer Peter Del Vecho are back to develop the sequel, Disney announced March 12 at its

annual shareholders meeting in San Francisco. ... Director Gareth Edwards' stand-alone *Star Wars* movie will be titled *Rogue One* and star Felicity Jones, while Rian Johnson will write and direct *Star Wars: Episode VIII*. ... DreamWorks Animation is developing with Verizon two new channels for its online children's platforms DreamWorksTV and AwesomenessTV. ... GKIDS has announced the English-language voice cast for its North American release of Studio Ghibli's *When Marnie Was There*. In addition to Hailee Steinfeld and Kiernan Shipka, the dub will feature the voices of Kathy Bates, Ellen Burstyn, Geena Davis, Catherine O'Hara, John C. Reilly, Raini Rodriguez, Vanessa Williams, Grey Griffin, Ava Acres and Ellen Burstyn. The film will launch May 22 in New York and Los Angeles, with expansion to other markets to follow. ... *Adventure Time* is headed for the big screen as an animated feature produced by Chris McKay, who also will direct, and Roy Lee. Cartoon Networks Studios will be involved in the production, as will show creator Pendleton Ward, who will have some involvement in writing and producing the feature version. ... TV director Rob Schrab is set to direct *The LEGO Movie* sequel. ... Alessandro Carloni has joined Jennifer Yuh as director on *Kung Fu Panda 3*. ... *Future-Worm!*, created by Emmy Award-winning director Ryan Quincy, is coming to Disney XD in short-form and a full-length series beginning this fall. ... *Underdogs*, the English-language version of the Argentinian animated feature *Metegol*, has had its release date reset for Aug. 14 by The Weinstein Co. ... An all-new *DuckTales* animated comedy series has been ordered for launch in 2017 on Disney XD channels around the world. ♦

PASSINGS

Jeff Hale, a prolific animator whose career spanned more than 50 years and included *The Great Toy Robbery* and the Lenny Bruce project *Thank You Mask Man*, died in late February in Oregon. He was 92.

Leonard Nimoy, the actor, director and artist who gave life to *Star Trek's* Mr. Spock, died March 8 at his home in Los Angeles. He was 83.

Gary Owens, an iconic and prolific announcer and voice actor, died Feb. 12 from complications related to diabetes. He was 80.

Phil Robinson, co-founder and creative director at San Francisco's Special Agent Productions and co-founder of Wild Brain Studios, died Jan. 28.

Sam Simon, the nine-time Emmy winning writer who co-created *The Simpsons*, died March 8 of colorectal cancer at home in Los Angeles. He was 59. ♦

April | May Planner

April



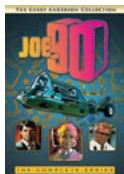
3-5

Catch the world premiere of the new DC animated movie *Batman vs. Robin* at **WonderCon** in Anaheim, Calif. (comic-con.org/wca)



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New on disc:
Batman vs. Robin; **Joe 90: The Complete Series**; **Teen Titans Go! Appetite for Disruption**; **Wild Kratts: Shark-Tastic**.



16-18

Take in shows and shorts for all ages in beautiful Venice at the 18th **Cartoons on the Bay**. (cartoonsbay.com)



28

Today's releases:
Paddington; **My Little Pony Tales: Complete Series**; **Mia and Me: Discover Centopia**; **Scooby-Doo and Scrappy-Doo: The Complete Season 1**.



MAY

1

Iron Man and company face a new foe in Joss Whedon's **Avengers: Age of Ultron**.



2015

NW Animation Fest

Portland • May 4-10
Eugene • May 15-17



4-10

Portland, Ore., hosts the **Northwest Animation Festival** – the largest toon fest in the U.S. (nwanimationfest.com)

5-10

Stuttgart Int'l Animation Festival and **FMX** kick off in Germany, while in Trebon, Czech Republic, you can check out the annual **AniFilm**. (itfs.de, fmx.de, anifilm.cz)



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On disc today: **Maya the Bee Movie**; **.hack//Roots: The Complete Series**; **Mickey Mouse Clubhouse: Minnie's Pet Salon**; **Team Umizoomi: Meet Shark Car**.



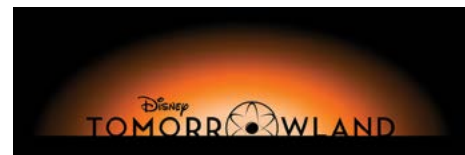
13-16

MIPTV spotlights Nordic productions at this year's Cannes event. (miptv.com)

miptv

22

Disney's **Tomorrowland** comes to life in the new Brad Bird film.



To get your company's events and products listed in this monthly calendar, please e-mail mercedes@animationmagazine.net.

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Books We Love

The Art of Mr. Hublot

By Joan Degive-Leonard, with Jerome Gillet and Marzenka Anne Krejcirick
[Zeit Productions, \$39]

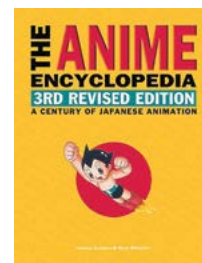
While most art-of books chronicle the making of full-length features, it's rare to find one that delves into the details involved in making an animated short film — even one that won an Oscar. That alone makes *The Art of Mr. Hublot* a real treat for fans and filmmakers who want to know how it was done. The winner of last year's Best Animated Short Film Oscar is a visual delight, using CG to replicate a stop-motion feel in telling its tale of a lonely mechanical man who lives in a robot city and adopts a pet. Written in both English and French, the book breaks down the entire filmmaking process, with plenty of insights from directors Laurent Witz and Alexandre Espigares and the film's crew. Liberally illustrated to show off the detailed designs and immaculately printed, this is a book animators and fans will find well worth the cost of shipping in from Europe.



The Anime Encyclopedia, 3rd Revised Edition

By Jonathan Clements and Helen McCarthy
[Stone Bridge Press; \$120 print, \$25 ebook]

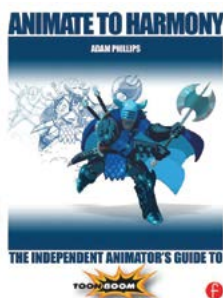
The world of anime is fast-paced and keeping up with it can seem like a daunting task. So fans and scholars should be thankful for this revised edition, which is fully updated and includes all the corrections made for the 2012 Kindle edition and more than a thousand new entries covering titles released since the last print edition in 2006. That alone would make this a massive and invaluable tome as it is, but Jonathan Clements and Helen McCarthy also have added thematic entries to this edition, covering topics ranging from fandom to voice acting to piracy and various genres. With the print edition coming in at a whopping 1,200 pages, there's no more thorough English-language anime resource on the planet. And the ebook edition, in addition to being a budget-conscious alternative, offers hyperlink connections to official sites, forums and more. Saying it's indispensable is an understatement.



Animate to Harmony: The Independent Animator's Guide to Toon Boom

By Adam Phillips
[Focal Press, \$45]

Whether you're a veteran of traditional animation looking to upgrade your skills or a tech-savvy independent animator looking to get the most out of your tools, *Animate to Harmony* is a thorough and definitive reference. Adam Phillips walks readers through the process of creating 2D animation using the Toon Boom programs Animate, Animate Pro and Harmony. Since the user interface is uniform across all three, the book allows users of any of those applications to learn something new, whether they're trying it out for the first time or looking for tips when transitioning from one to the other. The book is extensively illustrated and offers exercises for readers to test their skills with. This is a no-nonsense book that, for an extremely reasonable price, is worth it for anyone who works — or wants to work — with the increasingly popular Toon Boom software.



Corto Maltese: Under the Sign of Capricorn

By Hugo Pratt
[IDW/EuroComics, \$29.99]

Hugo Pratt stands among the icons of the world comic-book scene and his *Corto Maltese* series is widely regarded as one of the best comics ever done and beloved by fans of comics, cartooning and art the world over. Corto's globe-spanning adventures at the turn of the 20th century take him to the world's most dangerous spots, full of cunning villains and sultry temptations. This new edition, the first in a series from IDW's new EuroComics imprint, impressively delivers on its goal to present a definitive English-language edition of *Corto Maltese*. Unlike previous English editions, Pratt's expressive lines and inky shadows are razor sharp and presented in all its black-and-white glory on quality paper at a size that makes the book a joy to flip through. Further volumes will follow, until the entire story — the first and many say best long-form comics works — is complete. It's an adventure worth following.



— Tom McLean

ATOMICRON

Two mecha robots are shown in a dynamic pose against a vibrant space background filled with stars and nebulae. The robot on the left is primarily blue and grey, while the one on the right is orange and yellow with green accents. They appear to be in the middle of a battle or a powerful stance.

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THE DREAM FACTORY





Building a New Foundation

A tale of an unlikely inter-species friendship, *Home* steers DreamWorks Animation into new creative and technological territory. By Tom McLean.

DreamWorks Animation veteran Tim Johnson says his path to directing the studio's new film, *Home*, began – where else? – at home.

Johnson had picked up a copy of Adam Rex's novel *The True Meaning of Smekday* after reading a positive review of it in *The New York Times*. He started reading it to his kids, but continued on to the end after they had gone to bed.

"The moment I said 'Wow!' was a scene midway through the book – and we have a version of it midway through the movie – where this arrogant alien turns to the young girl and says, 'I think I am owing sorries to you,' and he apologizes for the invasion," says Johnson. "And she says, 'Don't call me Gratuity anymore, call me Tip.' That scene in the book made me choke up."

As soon as he finished reading the book, Johnson emailed DreamWorks Animation chief Jeffrey Katzenberg at 2 a.m. saying the studio had to make *Smekday* into a movie.

The end result is *Home*, which hit theaters March 27 and is looking to be the big box office hit DreamWorks Animation has been seeking for a while.

Home begins with the alien race called the Boov, which considers cowardice a positive trait and therefore takes over Earth as peacefully as possible. They relocate all humans safely to Australia, and hope to evade their galactic enemies, the Gorg on their new home planet.

All goes according to plan until a misfit Boov named Oh accidentally invites the entire galaxy – including the Gorg – to his housewarming party. On the run from his own race, Oh runs into a young girl named Gratuity "Tip" Tucci, who is the only human to have escaped the Boov's relocation and just wants to find her mother. Together, Oh and Tip form a tenuous partnership that takes them around the world to a final confrontation with the Boov and the Gorg.

The feature is DreamWorks Animation's sole feature film release for 2015 after recent shakeups at the studio that shuffled its release schedule and included cutbacks. Johnson directs from a script by Tom J. Astle and Matt Ember. Suzanne Buirgy and Mireille Soria, a veteran of the *Madagascar* franchise and the studio's recently promoted co-president of feature animation, produced *Home*. Jim Parsons,

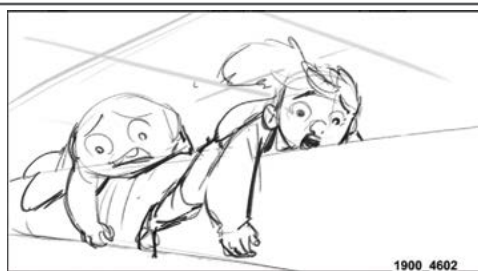
the Emmy-winning star of the CBS comedy *The Big Bang Theory*, voices Oh, while international music star Rihanna voices Tip. Rounding out the cast is comedy legend Steve Martin as Captain Smek, leader of the Boov.

Johnson's early-morning email to Katzenberg led the studio to option the film rights to Rex's book, and Johnson began to develop the project with Emil Mitev, who became art director on the movie.

Varying the Genre

One thing Johnson was especially interested in was finding a fresh look for the genre. "As a lover of science fiction, I wanted to make sure our movie didn't have laser blasters and space ships that looked just like every other science-fiction movie," he says.

Beginning with the art in Rex's book, Johnson found inspiration on a trip to Comic-Con in San Diego, where he bought some pop vinyl toys from Asia. "I bought a bunch of them and really kind of was moved to create the same sort of tactile, adorable quality (in the movie that) I saw in a lot of collectible vinyl toys," he says.



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A member of the alien Boov, Oh (voiced by *The Big Bang Theory* star Jim Parsons) and Gratuity "Tip" Tucci (voiced by music artist Rihanna) find themselves at a dangerous point in the DreamWorks Animation feature *Home*. The scene progressed from storyboard, top left; to layout, middle left; to animation, bottom left; and the final image, above.



Adapting the story also had its challenges, especially since the novel is told in the form of an essay Tip writes to be put in a time capsule and opened a hundred years in the future. Writers Astle and Ember had extensive credits writing and producing TV comedies before teaming up to write the feature film comedies *Failure to Launch* and *Get Smart*, as well as Blue Sky Studios' *Epic*.

"One of the first big breakthroughs was realizing the entire book takes place in the U.S., and it somewhat limits the scope of what is a worldwide alien invasion," Johnson says. "The

hanna come on to voice Tip and contribute to the soundtrack, earned the movie a green light. "When we decided to use Rihanna to voice Tip, everybody said, 'Well, that's a big idea. What if we also asked her to curate the music, to work with us on the music?' Then it was, OK, now we've got all these different sort of energies: beautiful storytelling, unique science-fiction sets, really appealing characters, a global appeal and then somebody to help us make it an event with the fantastic addition of her music."

In the book, Oh's character names himself J.Lo, after musician and actress Jennifer Lopez.

hard it is. Plus, he has this charisma that allows you to forgive the arrogance of the character."

Together, Parsons and Rihanna had the kind of high-quality chemistry needed to tell a road-trip story in which their characters would spend a lot of time talking to each other. "The chemistry has to be very rich and we don't have the easy chemistry of a sexual relationship," says Johnson.

Though Tip certainly breaks some ground as a female, non-white lead character for an animated film, Soria says she hopes audiences see the reality in her and accept her as a character.

"She's untypical, but she's incredibly typical. She's typical in life," says Soria. "She looks more like most of us, so I hope she's embraced."

Designs Are the Draw

Jason Reisig, head of animation on the movie, says the character designs for Oh and Tip – and how different they are – was one of the things that drew him to the project. "They spend a lot of time learning from each other and there are these really great moments for animation that's really attractive to animate," he says.

Figuring out the Boov was a big challenge. The aliens have "nostricals," which are tentacle-like appendages where their ears would be that are actually their smell sensors. They also have six pod-like feet. But Reisig says the real challenge was having Oh stand out as different from but still the same as his fellow Boov.

Tip posed a very different problem, Reisig says. "She wants to be an adult but she's still a kid, and

"It feels like you're pushing something that's tactile – it's got that immediacy to it and you're not juggling resolutions of characters and turning things on and off because it's too heavy."

– Jason Reisig, head of animation, *Home*

idea that we would take this around-the-world journey was very much imposed upon the book, and it was one of the important things in getting it to screen, too. I think Jeffrey Katzenberg and (former DreamWorks chief creative officer) Bill Damaschke all said it makes more sense for us to make a movie for a global marketplace that takes place on a global scale."

Coming up with an appealing character design for Oh, as well as the idea of having Ri-

Having worked with the real Lopez on *Antz*, Johnson cast her as Tip's mother and says she was into the idea the alien would be named after her. But other concerns involving confusion of trademarks and licensing prompted the filmmakers to rename their alien Oh.

Though the idea of contacting Rihanna came first, Parsons was the first voice cast for for the movie. "Jim can handle difficult text," says Johnson. "If you try to read it yourself, you'll see how



she's doing very grown up things in this situation where she's all alone and having to fend for herself. So she comes across as very old but we still had to find the young in her," he says.

DreamWorks has been pushing its technical capabilities to new heights with its proprietary Apollo software and a new tool dubbed Premo. Having directed DreamWorks Animation's first feature, *Antz*, and 2006's *Over the Hedge*, Johnson says the technology has improved drastically in every respect.

For example, on *Home* the detail built into the digital characters made it possible to use certain cinematic tools, such as allowing the camera to zoom in for a true chin-to-eyebrow cinematic close-up. "With this new software, you could go as close as you wanted and it all really communicated a rich inner life," says Johnson.

Reisig had taken a few years off from production to help bring an animator's point of view to developing the new technology, and found it tremendous fun to put the tools he had worked on to the test. The software allows animators to work in real time with full-resolution models, multiple characters and full textured environments.

"It feels like you're pushing something that's tactile – it's got that immediacy to it and you're

not juggling resolutions of characters and turning things on and off because it's too heavy," says Reisig.

Producer Susanne Buigy says the new tech required some training for animators, but the overall process is more intuitive and productive. "You can work so quickly and stuff looks so amazing and you can see it in real time, and I think it added to what we were able to do on the movie," she says.

The technology also allowed for some seemingly simple changes that live-action filmmakers take for granted. "Hair and makeup is an Academy Award category, and yet in animation you're lucky to get two hair styles (on any one character)," says Johnson. "I wanted to make sure we had different hair styles through the film and (Tip) has five different hair styles and it's always blowing in the wind in the car."

Though Johnson loves science fiction, the genre presents some specific difficulties – namely, how to convey exposition without boring or confusing the audience. That led to many different versions of the film's opening being written in an attempt to find one that worked. "We must have done – in 2014 alone – 10 openings to the movie," says Johnson. "We had to explain the Boov and why Oh is different and why Tip is the only human left. It was challenging. We tried to open with Tip but then you never forgive the aliens."

Though work on *Home* predates DreamWorks Animation's recent high-profile financial difficulties, Soria says there are hints in the film as to how she and Bonnie Arnold intend to proceed overseeing the creative aspects of the studio's feature animation department.

"Our plan going forward is we'll make movies that are universal in appeal and global and leave you feeling good about the human race," says Soria. "We want people to leave DreamWorks movies with a smile on your face." ☞



Tim Johnson



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Fast Starter

DreamWorks Animation Television has put the pedal to the metal developing a pipeline and staffing up quickly to fill big orders for high-quality shows. By Tom McLean.

Things move fast in TV animation production, but rarely has it moved as quickly as it has for DreamWorks Television Animation.

It was less than two years ago that DreamWorks Animation struck a ground-breaking deal to provide 300 hours of exclusive original content to Netflix – shows it turned right around and licensed to major players in the global TV market like Super RTL. At the time, the studio had developed animated series based on several of its features, including *The Penguins of Madagascar* and *Kung Fu Panda: Legends of Awesomeness* at Nickelodeon and *Dragons: Riders of Berk* at Cartoon Network.

But to handle the quantity and quality of material the studio had committed to producing, it had to ramp up DreamWorks Television Animation big time. The studio turned to a trio of former Nick execs who already had experience working with DreamWorks to get the operation up and running as fast as possible.

Margie Cohn, who spent 26 years at Nickelodeon before becoming the head of DreamWorks Animation Television, says 10 people were on board when she started in August

2013, and that number has now grown to more than 400 just in the company's Glendale, Calif., office. She joined fellow ex-Nick execs Peter Gal, head of television development, and Mark Taylor, head of television production, to

ally quickly with," she says.

Ten series are in production – not all have been officially announced – with *Turbo FAST*, *The Adventures of Puss in Boots*, *Veggie Tales in the House* and *All Hail King Julien* now

“The goal would be to develop properties that would still feel distinct to DreamWorks, even if they’re not coming off features.”

– Margie Cohn, head of television, DreamWorks Animation



spearhead the quick ramp-up to production.

“Optimism and resilience have been two of the qualities we’ve really needed as we try and get this done,” says Cohn. “It felt like if we were going to do this really, really quickly, those were two guys we could do it really, re-

streaming on Netflix, to be joined this summer by the new *Dragons: Race to the Edge*.

Feature Transition

Adapting animated features to TV series is nothing new, but it takes the right touch to

make a feature work as a series on its own without treading on sequel feature territory.

"We don't want to repeat the feature film experience. I think one of the fun parts for us has been trying to separate what is TV and what is feature," says Cohn.

Citing *Puss in Boots* as an example, Cohn says the series had to focus on exploring Puss's character rather than taking him on a single big journey the way a feature would. "We're dealing with his vanity, with his lack of interpersonal skills, with his taking on too much, his love of milk. We just play in that detail," she says. "We just have to carve it out from the features because you still want that to feel like a big, giant event."

The company's first original series, *Dinotux*, has been announced and is set to premiere this summer on Netflix.

"That was a different experience because it's an original," says Cohn. "The studio is used to a certain type of development and we were doing this really, really quickly and still needed to get as much depth and character into that world."

Finding talent to staff up the company as quickly as it had to was a real challenge, Cohn says, though it was aided by DreamWorks' reputation as an established and successful studio, as well as the job security implied by the quantity of material the studio has committed to producing.

Operating in 'The Hub'

Taylor spearheaded production by assembling a pipeline structure at the studio known as "the hub," in which teams oversee quality control of specific aspects of animation production, like assembling characters, prototypes and environments; and checking color, lighting and render times with partner studios.

"We really were careful so people looking at it didn't think, 'Oh, a cheap version of the movie,'" Cohn says. "The characters had enough of the original spirit so they worked on the television model but also looked great."

Cohn says the results have been compared – favorably at times – to the studio's feature film work. "We would have two models of King Julien turning around and we'd ask people to pick which one was the feature model and which was the TV model," she says. "We actually had a few people pick wrong ... which

made us so happy."

Being a recent launch, DreamWorks Animation Television is built for a world in which content is consumed in any number of ways – the company's Netflix deal being a prime example.

Cohn says the studios' shows are made to work both online and on television. Creatively, today's content has a greater element of serialization than in the past, and those elements are built into DreamWorks' series.

"A lot of what's happening for Netflix will also be impacting linear television, because why do you come to linear television if there's not something that kind of drives you through and compels you to watch episode after episode?" she says. "What can we carry from one episode to another that doesn't make it outright serialized, but it makes you say: 'That thread's left hanging. I want to see if it's answered in the next episode.'?"

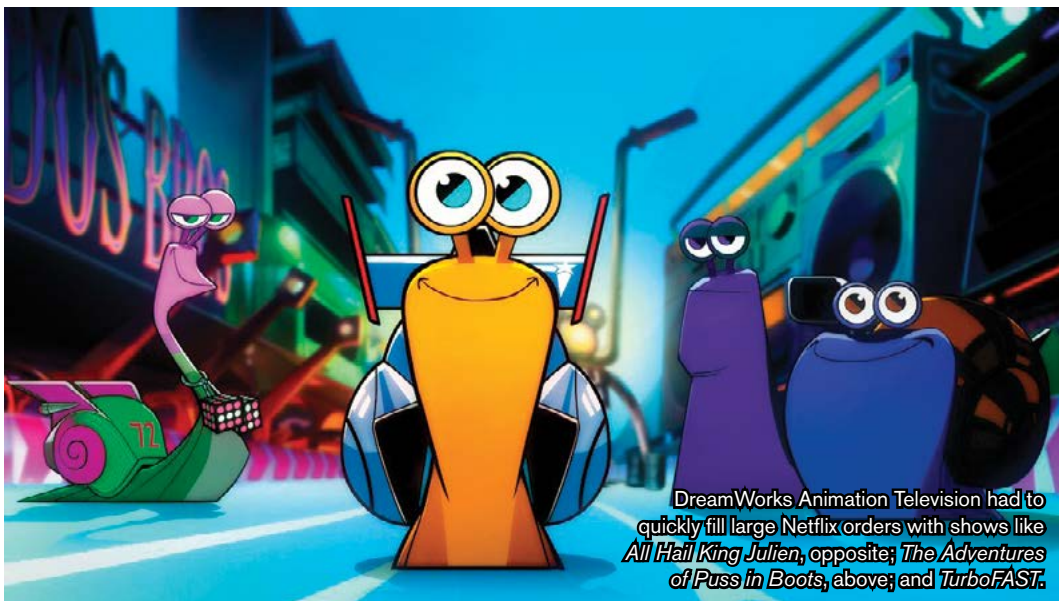
The Netflix model also offers a more long-

term distribution method, with shows available to watch at any time. "We don't have to worry about day-and-date ratings, so the library is there, the shows are there, for whenever people want to watch," Cohn says.

With so many orders, expect more series announcements – both familiar titles and original properties.

"The goal (with original shows) would be to develop properties that would still feel distinct to DreamWorks, even if they're not coming off features," says Cohn. "It doesn't mean we wouldn't be doing 2D, really hilarious shows, but we are trying to figure out – we're getting close – to what the DreamWorks differentiation might be."

Despite having started with a sprint, the end game for the studio is more like a marathon. "My goal has always been creating a library that stands the test of time – because these properties deserve it," Cohn says. ♦



DreamWorks Animation Television had to quickly fill large Netflix orders with shows like *All Hail King Julien*, opposite; *The Adventures of Puss in Boots*, above; and *TurboFAST*.

High-Tech Goes Low-Fi

Online channel DreamWorksTV drives demand for funny animated content for kids while winning over animators with creative control. By Tom McLean.

For passionate animators who've always wanted to create their own show but have never had the opportunity to do so, DreamWorksTV is a match made in heaven.

"We don't mess around; we just make stuff," says Birk Rawlings, head of animation for the channel.

And make stuff, it does. Based on YouTube, DreamWorksTV produces anywhere from 1,000 to 1,500 shorts a year — about half of which are animated, Rawlings says. Among the animated content are shows featuring characters from established DreamWorks franchises, such as *Shrek*, *Puss in Boots* and *Kung Fu Panda*.

But that still leaves a lot of room for original content and original visions. Among the hit series DreamWorksTV has launched: *Jimmy Blue Shorts*, a sketch comedy series about a pair of talking shorts; *Gorillaville*, about a trio of primates who cause trouble in a peaceful wildlife preserve; *News That Doesn't Suck*, featuring a kid-oriented, *The Onion*-style take on the news; the ensemble comedy series *Public Pool*; and the hit *Fifi: Cat Therapist*.

"When you're dealing with much bigger budgets and much bigger bets, it's hard to take risks on things that are unproven," says Rawlings. "We can do a silly show using cardboard characters and stop motion that bigger operations would never bet on."

For animators with an appropriate idea and the resources to pull it off, it's the best of both worlds to have creative control and DreamWorks branding.

"We feel like we're in control," says Chris Hamilton, president of animation studio Odd-



bot and producer on several DreamWorksTV shows, including Zach Aufdemberg's *Jimmy Blue Shorts*; *Public Pool*, created by David Fremont; and Dennis Messner's upcoming *Fishstick and Honeybear* show. "(Rawlings) definitely gave us a lot of creative freedom and we came up with some really wacky ideas and he definitely supported Zach and our direction."

Awesome Origins

DreamWorksTV had its origins in a company called AwesomenessTV, which DreamWorks

Animation and minority partner Hearst Corp. acquired in 2013. Rawlings says DreamWorks was drawn to the company, founded in 2012 by Brian Robbins, because of its success reaching teenage viewers. DreamWorks wanted to do the same thing with children and bring to that audience the studio's brands.

"It is a daunting thing to create something from scratch, but doing so in this really exciting playpen that is digital distribution and the Internet has actually been really fun and rewarding so far," says Rawlings.

"We can do a silly show using cardboard characters and stop motion in a way that bigger operations would never make that bet."

— Birk Rawlings, head of animation, DreamWorksTV



Chris Hamilton



David Fremont



Jimbo Matison



Stephen Leonard



News puppeteers Asako Miyahira, Giulia Verde.

But so much demand means the channel is wide open for new, original content from animators of all types.

"We're finding them from all over," says Rawlings. "It's a mix of creators and artists with a lot of experience in traditional television or movies, in some cases that have developed a lot of things or worked on other people's shows but haven't had a lot of opportunity to get their own voice out there."

The relationships often originated over many years, but the studio is willing to work with talented newcomers who show they can produce the content with limited resources and under tight deadlines.

Animators supplying content for the channel work in any number of ways, from one-person shops to creators subcontracting with a third-party studio for some of the work to the channel working directly with a full-service studio, Rawlings says.

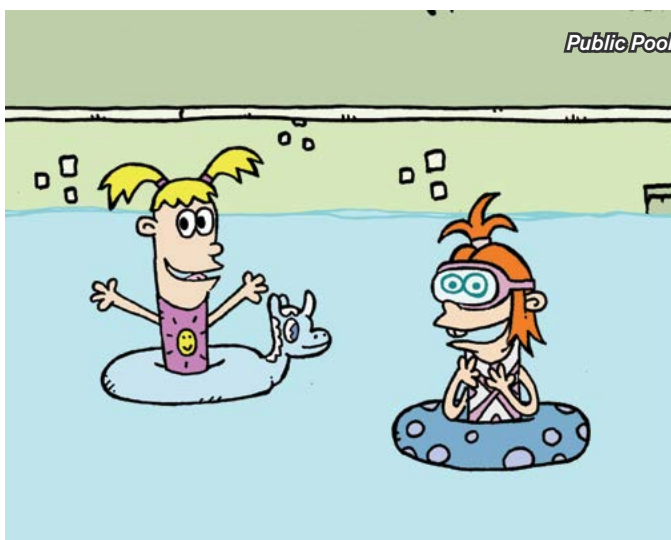
The studio buys the rights to the shows it picks up for DreamWorksTV and "we try to arrange the deals in such a way that we all participate in its success," Rawlings says.

The speedy approach and lack of a network oversight infrastructure means

animators have a lot of creative freedom and a much less formal review process.

"I'm basically a one-man team. I have my actors and my composer, but I do all the writing, storyboarding, animation, sound design – all that kind of stuff," says Stephen Leonard, creator of *Dueling Kapowskis*. "They give me parameters that I need to work in and they just say, stay within these, this is our target group, and then they give me some notes along the way. But I have 95 percent control of the show, and that's been great because as a creator that's what I want."

"We'll check in at all the major phases – premise, script, storyboard and animation – but it's a very different creative interaction than you would have at a traditional studio or network," says Rawlings. "While there are some



looks like that and I wanted to have something that anyone could look at it and go, yeah, that's just cardboard."

So far, the high-profile studio characters have attracted the most viewers, but Rawlings says the Internet gives new ideas a better chance to find an audience than traditional media.

"You don't have just that one weekend or that one

hard lines in terms of what's appropriate for our audience, beyond that it's more of a conversation and guidance rather than directives."

Saying Yes is Fun

Part of what's fun about the job is the ability to say yes to many projects and to experiment with different forms and styles, Rawlings says.



He cites Jimbo Matison's *News That Doesn't Stink* series, which is animated using cardboard cutouts and puppets.

"Everything on the show really is made out of cardboard," says Matison. "For me, everything that's coming out is all CG and it looks slick and very produced, but I think a little too much of it

month to try to find an audience," he says. "When we believe in something we can keep plugging away and try different ways to grow the audience, and so it's one of the benefits of working in this space."

There are fewer differences than many expect between producing content for traditional television than for the Internet, Rawlings says.

"The difference is not so much about (how it's made) as it is about the way that it is consumed," says Rawlings. "Kids in particular have just voracious appetites for the characters that they love and digital delivery is uniquely constructed in such a way that it can feed that appetite much more readily than traditional linear networks."

That means making sure a steady flow of content and ways to market it are always available.

Being based on YouTube brings certain advantages to certain shows. "It's a search engine and so you need to make sure that you're taking advantage of the platform that you're on in terms of maximizing discovery," Rawlings says. "That's part of why, for example, *Fifi: Cat Therapist* has done well, is there's a lot of people going to YouTube to find cool new cat stuff."

Rawlings is looking at expanding DreamWorksTV to platforms beyond YouTube and

making it a primary destination for kids and families looking for a laugh. "In the near term, that means more original shows, and it means more shows featuring kids' favorite characters and expanding our reach any way possible." ♦



Breaking the Rules

Chowder creator C.H. Greenblatt explains how his new Nickelodeon series *Harvey Beaks* took flight. By Tom McLean.

Carl H. Greenblatt, best known for his work on shows like *SpongeBob SquarePants* and creating *Chowder*, has a new series on Nickelodeon.

Harvey Beaks premiered March 29 and each Sunday night will show kids that "rules are made to be broken." *Harvey Beaks* is a show about a kid who lives by the rules but yearns for adventure and just wants to have fun.

Greenblatt explains it all and how this whole world came into existence.

Animation Magazine: *Where did the idea for this show come from and in particular what, for you, sets it apart from the other shows that you've done?*

Carl Greenblatt: It started because where my house is there are a lot of trees. As far as location, that kind of gave me a sense of what I wanted to do next. And one of the early designs was just this little crazy looking imp, and I thought he was really fun and I kind of placed him in the woods and started to think of what adventures he could get into and what kind of things could happen with him. And then the more I played with him, I had this little bird character

that I kept kind of pairing him with. And as I started writing it I realized, "Oh, the bird is just me." And then it was kind of really easy to figure it out at that point.

Animag: *Talk a little bit about what sort of stories you're looking to tell with this concept, and are you doing more comedy or more action?*

Greenblatt: Coming into this, my goal with this show was to make a good comedy show, so the comedy is still there and hopefully people are laughing and having a good time. But beyond that, I really did want to do something a little more thoughtful, a little sweeter, a little more emotional, that had a bit more staying

episodes off of those outlines. They do have a lot of input in how things end up coming out. For this process, I actually tried going and finding a lot of fresh voices for the boarding.

Animag: *Is there a particular visual style you're trying to create for this show? How are you trying to make it look different from other shows?*

Greenblatt: We brought in Bill Dely as our art director. He brought an element that I really wanted, which is sort of this impressionistic feeling to the woods. I wanted it to really feel like there was light and there was depth without making it a fully rendered woods.

Animag: *What made you pick certain people to play their roles in this cast?*

Greenblatt: For Harvey, Fee and Foo – and most of the kids – we used real kid actors. And that was really important to me, to capture that genuine feeling, that innocent feeling you get from using real kids. I just don't think you can approximate that with adults. Harvey is voiced by Max Charles and he's kind of all over the place, but he has such a sweetness and an innocence to his voice, it just feels so perfect for Harvey. It's hard to imagine anyone else as him right

Harvey, Fee and Foo enter the woods in pursuit of adventure in the new Nickelodeon series *Harvey Beaks*.



power to it, in the sense that it makes you think a little bit.

Animag: *What kind of writing crew do you have on this and what's the style (i.e., board first or script first)?*

Greenblatt: It's a board-driven show. We have a writers' room of four writers, counting our story supervisor, and so they're working up outlines. And then I've got four teams of board artists, two each, and they're writing and drawing

now. Fee is this actress Angelina Waller. She's really good too, very natural. And then Foo is another kid, his name's Jackson Brundage. He's super funny, and casting Foo was tough because we needed someone to do like a little weird Grover voice and finding a kid that could do it and it would still be weird and still be funny was tough. And then, for Harvey's dad, we have Scott Adsit, and he's great, too, because it was finding that warmth; someone who sounds like a natural goober, which is what his dad is, and Scott can play that really well and they just sound good together. Most of the characters you see are kids. It's a fun group. ♦



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Q&A: Brad Neely

The creator of Adult Swim's *China IL* talks up the junior-year season at world's worst university. By Tom McLean.

Creator, writer and voice actor Brad Neely brings the shenanigans of the world's worst university to hilariously inept new lows with *China IL*'s return April 5 at 11:30 p.m. ET/PT to Adult Swim for a third season.

The long gap between seasons — the second season of 10 episodes aired its finale in November 2013 — should seem worth the wait for fans as vile faculty members and brothers Frank and Steve Smith make a wager on who can get the other's students to hook up first. Meanwhile, Pony and Baby Cakes are put inside a literal tank as part of the Dean's desire for a "think-tank" solution to world overpopulation. And that's just the first episode.

We caught up with Neely to talk about the third season of the series, which is animated by Los Angeles-based Titmouse.



Frank Smith celebrates his season-opening gambling victory, above; and Baby Cakes explores some dark — and funny — places in Adult Swim's college comedy *China, IL*.



Animation Magazine: What is the third season going to be like and how will it be different from seasons one and two?

Brad Neely: This season, we really tried to take advantage of the fact that we've been around for a couple of years and get a little weirder with our storytelling. Not necessarily the content, but the structure of how we tell stories. It's not your typical A, B, C stories every time. Some stories are one big story that takes over all of them, or one storyline is just one person talking, and we do a double-length musical at the end of this season. We really just played with the form of the storytelling.

Animag: What are the challenges of taking a show into the third season?

Neely: Staying fresh and digging deeper and deeper into these characters, figuring out what parts of their horrible psyches we haven't mined or turned into comedy. So, that was a challenge, but also the fun part — getting to know the deeper, darker sides of Pony and Frank and Baby Cakes and

Steve and just keep pushing it.

Animag: Has the production process changed over three seasons?

Neely: We tightened up and we've learned that the initial part of the production really needed to be here, in house. But now that we know what we need from the show, we've been able to look into some overseas animation houses for the later phases, which speeds it up and lets us bring the show to the audience faster.

There's been a large hiatus between seasons two and season three, and hopefully if there's a season four, now that we're looking to do this sort of process, we're looking to close that gap.

Animag: Are there any changes in the

way the show looks?

Neely: We've done some subtle tuning up. We have so many great people working on the show figuring out how to make it look more expensive or just cleaner. We built all these head packs for our characters and revised their designs. We had a big, big discussion about line weight. We use a one over-all line weight for the show and we've increased that for this season. It's nothing noticeable other than it might be a little more clear delineation between shapes for an unsuspecting viewer. If you watched it side by side with, especially, season one, you'd be able to see a difference just in clarity of the shapes.

Animag: Are you still involved in the writing of every episode?

Neely: I write every episode.

We have a room full of writers when I'm initially working out the outlines and the concepts for the episodes, but I'm a control freak is what we're really boiling it down to.

Animag: Who's directing the third season?

Neely: We split those duties up between two of our guys: Griffith Kimmins and Angelo Hatgastavrou.

Angelo was the assistant director last season and now he and Griff are sharing those duties, doing half and half. It's been great. We ask so much from those guys and last year I feel like we brutalized Griff, so I'm glad to be able to take part of it off of him and take some years off of Angelo's life. ♦



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VISIT US @ MIPTV
STAND P1N1-P1M2

52 X 11'



For any queries, please contact :
Micheline Azoury | m.azoury@mondotv.it | +39 06 86323293
Mira Jeong | mira@auroraworld.com | +82 10 8663 9671





Silent but Funny

Writing duo discusses the challenges of making people laugh without using dialog on *Angry Birds Toons*.

Comedy is when a bird hits a pig – and Baboons are writing for them both. Yes, Baboon Animation has just wrapped up its share of the writing on Rovio's *Angry Birds Toons*, seasons two and three, and is moving on to another *Angry Birds* project.

Boasting 4.7 billion views and counting, *Angry Birds Toons* is soaring. But with neither limbs nor voices, what makes the agitated avians so enduring? Two core members of Baboon's *Angry Birds* team, Joe Vitale and Javier Valdez, chat with Claire Stenger about voiceless comedy and timeless characters.

What are your top rules for writing physical comedy?

Joe Vitale: Make it big, make it broad, and then try to think of something else that begins with the letter B. Oh yeah – character! Did I mention I'm a bad speller? Above all, focus on the character you're writing for. What would they do if they were sliding down a bobsled track lined with hot dogs? A vegetarian would react much differently than a competitive eater. A character's mindset will drive their physicality, which is why personally I think it's funnier to have a person who's disgusted by meat sliding down a hot dog slide. And now I'm hungry.

Javier Valdez: It's easier to scale back than scale bigger. If a character is being launched into the sky, I'll have him bounce off the moon. If I feel that doesn't work right, it's easier to come up with him hitting a blimp or something even funnier, because I already established an upper limit.

How do you navigate successful physical comedy using completely limbless characters?

Valdez: I don't know if I could have if I hadn't grown up watching *Homestar Runner* shorts on the web. It definitely ingrained in me how the audience will accept typing without fingers or swinging a bat without arms if there's a real strength of character. The audience is interested in what the character does with the rubber chicken he picks up, not how he picks it up.

Vitale: Well, there's a lot of jumping around,



Joe Vitale



Javier Valdez

flinging, bouncing, crashing – it's a lot like me trying to ice skate. But the trick is to know what the characters want. Then it's a simple matter of getting them from point A to point B using any obstacles (like the lack of hands) to your advantage. Bouncing off the walls now becomes a necessity, not just a cheap stunt. All of these characters are driven by something, and they're not going to let phantom limbs stand in their way.

What are your biggest physical comedy influences? Why?

Valdez: Definitely the classic Warner Bros. shorts. They're great examples of having gags that work off of character. I mean, Daffy Duck and Elmer Fudd react totally differently to getting flattened by an anvil; they couldn't be swapped out and have the same gags work.

Vitale: Personally, I've always admired Charlie Chaplin. Chaplin wasn't brutish or haphazard with his physical comedy; he was elegant. The Tramp – this was a character who was at the rock bottom of society, who you might expect to be clumsy or sloppy even – but he wasn't going to let his social standing take his dignity. Chap-

lin's a great example of how physicality can define a character, and what makes us root for the underdog. As for contemporary physical comedy influences, that would have to be my mom when she sees a snake.

The *Angry Birds Toons* characters are all nonverbal. Any special techniques, in general, for working with characters that don't speak?

Vitale: There are two rules that you must follow when writing nonverbal characters. First off, facial expressions are paramount. As for the second rule, I'm explaining that to you with my eyebrows.

Valdez: I think you kind of have to play charades with yourself. Can you make a sound and a face that communicates, "Quick, grab that fire extinguisher!" or "That's no fire extinguisher, you moron!"? Now, can you do that in-character? How would King Pig communicate this idea as opposed to Terence?

Vitale: And you need to know what's driving these facial expressions, and that's where the character's wants and needs come into play. If the birds see a threat to their eggs, you'll be able to read the worry on their faces. The safety of the eggs is paramount. But if it's a pig who sees the eggs? Their face will light up with ravenous greed, because all they want in the world is to eat them. Just like me when I'm looking at a Denny's menu.

Tune in next issue for the second half of the interview with some of Baboon's top bird brains!



WHERE GLOBAL LIKE-MINDED PROFESSIONALS GATHER



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MIPTV Toon Sampler

A delectable dozen of the freshest animated shows on offer at the 2015 MIPTV market taking place April 13-16 in Cannes, France.

Blinky

Producer: Studio 100 Media

Package: 52 x 11 (in development)

Target Audience: Kids 5-7

Type of Animation: CG

Based on: *The Complete Adventures of Blinky Bill*, written and illustrated by Dorothy Wall

Synopsis: With his heroic dad away on his own adventures, Blinky takes up the mantle as "Guardian of Greenpatch." Always upbeat in the face of danger and guided by his adventurer's handbook, the cheeky young koala and loyal sidekick Jacko protect their hometown from all perils – real or imagined.



Selling Points: One of Australia's most recognized characters, *Blinky* is the most-recent vehicle for the young marsupial who has appeared in iconic book and TV series since the 1930s. Flying Bark Productions is currently wrapping up *Blinky Bill: The Movie* for the end of the year, reinvigorating the classic brand.

Stand: R7.C1

studio100media.com

Boubouh!

Producer: Cyber Group Studios, The Jim Henson Co.

Based on: The book *Boubouh!*, written by Ingrid Chabbert and illustrated by Amandine Duggon

Synopsis: Boubouh is your typical hairy, squinty-eyed, large-toothed monster in every way except one: He's frightened of kids! After some coaching from the old teddy bear Glups, Boubouh overcomes his fear and befriends 6-year-old Lucas, who is up for any adventure.

Selling Points: "*Boubouh!* delivers the unique visual charm that is synonymous with



The Jim Henson Co.'s productions," says Henson exec VP of children's entertainment Halle Stanford. Cyber Group's chairman and CEO Pierre Sissman adds: "Both our organizations and executives share a long tradition of providing the best children's and family entertainment around the world. And we are excited and convinced that these two productions will be able to gather the best skills of both teams in creative vision and execution and provide great entertainment to all."

Stand: R7.E65

cybergroupproductions.com

Camp Yeti

Producer: Nelvana, Abominable Snowman

Package: 52 x 11 (in development)

Target Audience: Preschool

Type of Animation: CG

Created by: Keith Chapman and Ian Liddell

Synopsis: This charming series centers on a sweet young yeti named Pigtail Poppy and her friends at a special sleepaway summer camp for li'l yetis, high in the mountains.

They spend their days exploring, making crafts and learning from their cool camp leaders, Big Hair Blair and Beehive Bea.

Selling Points:

Chapman and Liddell bring tons of kids' TV experience to this new cryptozoological concept, having previously collaborated on Chapman Entertainment hits like



Roary the Racing Car and *Fifi and the Flower Tots*. "Keith has a strong history of creating compelling series that kids love, such as the iconic *Bob the Builder*, and we know that *Camp Yeti* will be a world that kids won't be able to resist," says Nelvana Studios VP Irene Weibel. The British-Canadian co-pro is expected to arrive in fall 2016.

Stand: P6.A1

corusent.com | nelvana.com

Fangbone: Third Grade Barbarian

Producer: Radical Sheep Productions, DHX Television

Package: 52 x 11

Target Audience: Kids & Family

Type of Animation: 2D

Based on: *Fangbone* graphic novels, by Michael Rex

Executive Producer: Michael Rex, John Leitch, Michelle Melanson Cuperus

Synopsis: The story follows a young



barbarian warrior from Skullbania who travels through a magical portal into the suburbs of our world and lands suddenly in Eastwood Elementary School. His mission: To protect the blackened big toe of Venomous Drool from being reunited with its master – the evil sorcerer in current-day existence. With the help of his new sidekick, Bill, Fangbone embarks on a quest to outwit Drool's monsterish minions while discovering the modern world.

Selling Points: Disney XD Canada is slated to debut the series in spring 2016, having premiered the pilot in May 2014. The pilot recently scooped up the Best One-Off, Special or TV Movie for Kids Award at Kidscreen, and earned a nod in the Best Animated Program category at the Canadian

Screen Awards. "Everyone has fallen in love with Michael Rex's books and we can't wait to share *Fangbone* with kids around the world," says Radical Sheep exec producer Michelle Melanson Cuperus.

Stand: R7.A11

dhxmedia.com

Filly Funtasia

Producer: BRB Internacional, Dracco

Package: 26 x 30

Target Audience: Kids & Family

Type of Animation: HD CG

Based on: Filly toy brand from Dracco

Written By: Sean Derek (*The Smurfs*), Noelle Wright (*Sofia the First*), Dean Stefan (*Penguins of Madagascar*), Jymn Magon (*The Smurfs*), Johnny Hartman (*Monster High*), rank Young (*Totally Spies*)

Synopsis: These comedic adventures follow a group of "fillys" – unicorns, elves, fairies, princesses and witches – at the Royal Academy of Magic in Funtasia. There, they learn about potions, precious stones and getting through strange and amusing situations at school – all while fending off the clumsy efforts by the evil magician Wranglum and his assistant, Battiwiggis.



Selling Points: The collectible Fillys line of tiny ponies bedecked with Swarovski crystals already has a worldwide fan base that started creating its own entertainment content and sharing it online. The official show comes with a 360-degree strategy assembled by Dracco, as well as having a strong presence on new platforms like YouTube, smart TVs, video on-demand and more. *Filly Funtasia* was recently picked up by Discovery Italy for its K2 channel (2016).

Stand: R7.F25 - R7.H14

brb.es | filly.com

Freaktown

Producer: Portfolio Entertainment

Package: 52 x 11 or 26 x 22

Target Audience: Kids 6-11

Type of Animation: 2D

Created by: Peter Ricq and Philippe Ivanusic

Broadcasters: Teletoon (anglophone & francophone Canada, 2015)



Synopsis: This roller-coaster ride of a comedy cartoon follows the adventures of living skeleton Ben Bones and his friends as they do their best to evade their nefarious nemesis: Princess Boo Boo of Sweetlandia. The pink-clad terror is bent on giving their fun, freaky selves a sickly sweet makeover at any cost.

Selling Points: With a punchy look and pedigreed creators (Ricq and Ivanusic also conceived Nerd Corps' *League of Super Evil*), Portfolio's co-founder and co-CEO Joy Rosen believes this series is just what the global cartoon scene is missing. "We are thrilled to unleash *Freaktown* on the market. This is a series that flips convention on its ear as what appears gross is really great and what's sweet is really kind of sour."

Stand: P-1A0, P-1.A51, P-1.B51

portfolioentertainment.com

Jim Henson's Enchanted Sisters

Producer: The Jim Henson Co., Cyber Group Studios

Target Audience: Kids 5-8

Based on: *The Enchanted Sisters* book series by The Jim Henson Co. in collaboration with Elise Allen and Paige Pooler

Written By: Elise Allen (*Sid the Science Kid*, *Dinosaur Train*)

Synopsis: The Sparkles – Spring, Winter, Summer and Autumn – are four sisters who come together every three months to join their Mother Nature in a ceremony that changes the seasons in our world. The young heroes are confident in themselves and through their magic adventures show kids it's OK to embrace and celebrate their differences.



Selling Points: "In building out a new fantasy world for older kids that will feature the visual excellence we are known for, we are grateful to partner with Cyber Group Studios, whose quality animation and top-tier creative team will be sure to serve the rich, exciting stories of *Enchanted Sisters* very well," says Halle Stanford, exec VP of children's entertainment for The Jim Henson Co.

Stand: R7.E45

henson.com

Mutant Busters

Producer: Planeta Junior, Famosa, Kotoc

Package: 52 x 11 (preproduction)

Target Audience: Kids 6-8

Based on: *Mutant Busters* action-figure game by Famosa

Synopsis: *Mutant Busters* takes young viewers to a grim future Earth poisoned by pestilent, toxic gases. The world is divided into two sectors: one inhabited by the humans of "La Résistance" and the other populated by stinky, repulsive mutants bent on taking over the planet.



Selling Points: The *Mutant Busters* property successfully launched in 2013 as a game blending digital and physical elements. Kotoc, which also co-produces Planeta Junior's successful *Sendokai Champions Challenge*, is in charge of series design, and game creator Famosa is heavily involved in development. "We are proud to make it possible that a highly successful toy becomes an audiovisual reality with endless media applications, since normally it's the opposite," says Planeta Junior commercial director Diego Ibáñez.

Stand: R7.D19

planeta-junior.com | mutantbusters.com

Super 4

Producer: Method Animation, Morgen Studios; distributed by PGS Entertainment

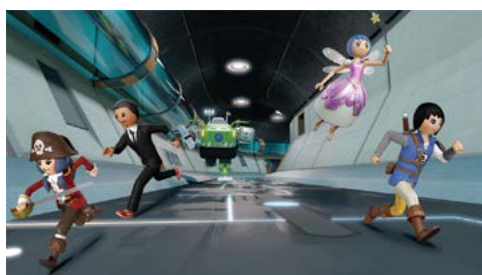
Package: 52 x 11

Target Audience: Kids 5-9

Type of Animation: CG

Created by: Jessie Cleverly and Romain Van Liemt

Based on: Playmobil figures and playsets



Broadcasters: France Televisions (commissioning), CITV (U.K.), Cartoon Network (Italy, Latin America), Canal Panda (Spain), VRT (Flemish Belgium), MiniMax (Eastern Europe), Thai TV3, NTV7 (Malaysia), Netflix (U.S.) and more

Synopsis: *Super 4* follows Alex the Knight, Ruby the Pirate, Agent Gene and Twinkle the Fairy as they travel in their multitransformable Chameleon vehicle through five extraordinary islands: Technopolis, Kingsland, Enchanted Island, Gunpowder Island and a Lost World.

Selling Points: The series marks the first time that the 40-year-old Playmobil toy brand has been brought to animated life on the small screen, stirring interest around the globe. “*Super 4* is creating so much excitement among buyers,” says PGS co-founder Philippe Soutte. “Method and Morgen are delivering a unique show, which, for the first time in animation, has a storyline that mixes fairies, knights, pirates and robots all together!”

Stand: P-1.N2

pgsentertainment.com

Wind in the Willows: Mole of Mole End

Producer: Martin Gates Production, Cloth Cat Animation, Hoho Entertainment

Package: 52 x 11

Target Audience: Kids 4-7

Type of Animation: 2D

Based on: *Wind in the Willows*, by Kenneth Grahame

Synopsis: Part of Britain's great literary



heritage, the adventures of Mole, Rat and Toad have been enchanting children for generations. The new series will breathe new life into the stories for a whole new generation of children, rediscovering beloved old characters and introducing some new female ones, including adventurous Squirrel, resourceful Rabbit and the scheming Chief Weasel.

Selling points: Martin Gates Productions' *Wind in the Willows* special, “Mole's Christmas” was the most-exported British TV program between 1993 and 2003 and was broadcast in 213 territories. Book sales now are more than 85 million copies, sold into 70 countries and 29 languages. All of this illustrates the enduring appeal of the characters. MPG also made *The Adventures of Mole* and *The Adventures of Toad*, and knows these characters inside out.

Stand: R8.D11

hohoentertainment.com

Yoko

Producer: Wizart Animation, Somuga, Dibulitoon Studio



Package: 52 x 13 (in production)

Target Audience: Preschool 4-6

Type of Animation: CG

Written By: Andy Yerkes (*Pocoyo*), Kevin Strader (*Jelly Jam*), Evgenia Golubeva (*Luntik*), Leo Murzenko (*Kikoriki*), Edorta Barrietabeña (*Unibertsolariak*), Cristina Broquetas

Synopsis: *Yoko* focuses on outdoor play patterns, incorporating a social curriculum mixing friendship, nature and imagination. The show is about friends Oto, Mai and Vik, who meet at the city park to play with its magical inhabitant, Yoko. The creature's naive nature turns their everyday games into high-stakes adventures, where playgrounds become spaceships or the sun switches off because camping is just more fun in the dark.

Selling Points: The property was recently named Animated Series with the Highest International Potential by MIP organizers Reed MIDEM at Russia's Suzdal Animation Festival. “We expect that broadcasters will appreciate *Yoko's* potential for international markets,” says Wizart producer Yuri Moskvina.

“We are also in negotiations with licensing partners, such as games producers, mobile applications, F&B partners, which could support *Yoko's* release in many countries.”

Stand: Russian Cinema R7.E40

wizartanimation.com | yokopark.com

Zip Zip

Producer: GO-N Productions

Package: 52 x 13

Target Audience: Kids 6-10

Type of Animation: Digital 2D

Created by: Aurore Damant, based on an original idea by Anne Ozannat; directed by Lionel Allaix, story edited by Cynthia True

Broadcasters: France Televisions (commissioning), SuperRTL (Germany), Disney France, France 3, SVT (Sweden), SIC K (Portugal), ITI Neovision (Poland), E-Junior (U.A.E.), DSTV Kids (Angola & Mozambique)

Synopsis: These “pets” have a secret ... and it's totally wild! This comedy series features an ensemble cast of wild animals disguised as domestic pets in order to enjoy a life of luxury with an unsuspecting suburban family. However, the quiet life they crave is ever elusive, and constantly threatened by their



animal instincts.

Selling Points: “*Zip Zip* is a show that comes along only once in a while, one in which you have a cast of characters with heart and warmth, who are also able to do all the wild and crazy things that kids love to see in a cartoon,” says story editor Cynthia True. Commissioning partner France Televisions' youth programming co-directors Tiphaine de Ragueneil and Pierre Siracuse says the strong and unique graphic design and funny concept appeal to both boys and girls.

Stand: P-1.A75, P-1.B71

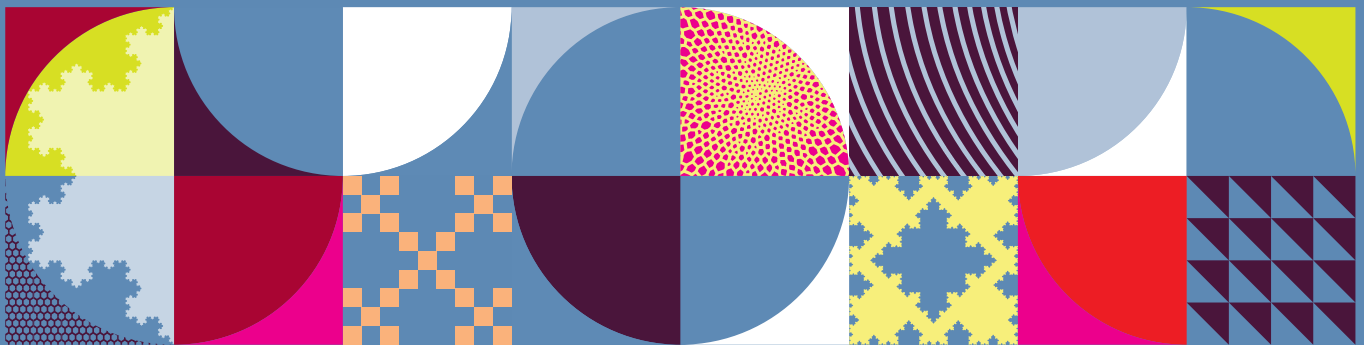
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Technicolor's Animated Centennial

As the company's name implies, technology has always been at the core business of Technicolor. One hundred years ago, that meant developing what would become the dominant technology for shooting and projecting color film. Now, digital entertainment in general and animation in particular are at the core of the centennial-celebrating company.

Technicolor's entry into animation began in 2008 with the acquisition of Paprika Studio in Bangalore, India. Having first developed the studio's potential as a service studio — its size has doubled over the past four years to roughly 800 employees — Technicolor has since worked toward developing its own animation properties.

"As a strictly work-for-hire service studio, you aspire to have ownership in properties and in brands in order to add value to your company," says Robert Winthrop, head of animation and games. "Before we were involved in original IP development, we were the Technicolor brand, which is amazing, and we were an animation studio in

India. Now we are an entertainment company that not only has an amazing studio in India, but a studio that creates, develops and produces amazing entertainment and nurtures fantastic brands."


The company's first wave of properties — adventure series *The Deep*, co-produced with

— co-produced with Mercury — and comedy series *Bear, Bud & Boo*.

Technicolor acquired in February the Paris-based OuiDo Productions to establish a base in producing branded entertainment content in Europe. Headed by Sandrine Nguyen and Boris

Hertzog, OuiDo's production credits include *Alvinnnn! & the Chipmunks*, Sega's *Sonic Boom*; an adaptation of French comic-book series *Les Légendaires*, and a new series of *Monchhichi*.

"We like the brands that they were producing and their ability to finance them out of France, and we felt that was a missing piece in the overall strategy, which is participating in branded entertainment," says Winthrop.

The company sees that as a growth market despite increasing competition as it heads into its second century. "Known brands with brand equity are still, I think, the go-to's," Winthrop says. "And whether it's on a handheld device or on a television or in the theater, those go-to brands are going to drive commerce." 



Nerd Corps and A Stark; and comic superhero series *Atomic Puppet*, developed and produced with Mercury Filmworks and Gaumont — are in production and will be the focus of Technicolor's efforts at MIPTV. Technicolor also is offering a peek at a pair of in-development shows: an adaptation of the children's book series *Chamelia*

Adult Toons Rising

Viacom Pitches *Moonbeam City* as Genre Grows

Once considered a rather radical idea, animated TV shows for adults have become unlikely stars in the global TV market.

Shows like *The Simpsons*, *South Park* and *Family Guy* that have run for years — or decades in the case of *The Simpsons* — have proven enduring demand for adult toons is more than a flash in the pan. And having established themselves in every viable market the world over, a new generation of adult animated shows is looking to step up.

One such contender is *Moonbeam City*, an upcoming Comedy Central series created by Scott Gairdner about Dazzle Novak, an inept 1980s cop voiced by Rob Lowe. The show deeply mines the insanity of 1980s live-action

cop shows — as well as the decade's flashy neon style — for its humor.


Caroline Beaton, senior VP of international program sales for Viacom International Media



Networks, says adult animated shows have proven appeal that transcends borders.

"This is one of the more broad-appeal commissions Comedy Central in the U.S. have made and it's one of the ones I'm most excited and optimistic about taking out into the market," says Beaton.

Scheduled to debut on Comedy Central later this year, Viacom is confident enough in the show to take it to MIPTV.

"There is serious money being invested in adult animation as it tends to have a long life in schedules," Beaton says. "The reason we commissioned this show and are working on the show is we see this genre as one that is very clearly in growth. It's very clear that more shows are coming into the market place." 

Going Green

Aurora World and Mondo TV team up to take the eco-themed *YooHoo & Friends* brand to the next level of success.

South Korean toy brand *YooHoo & Friends* is looking to reach the next level of success, aided by a partnership between the property's owner and developer, Aurora World Inc., and Italian production and distribution company Mondo TV.

Aurora World launched *YooHoo & Friends* as a line of plush toys based on endangered species and developed a 2D animated series that aired for two seasons starting in 2009. Now, Aurora is back with a third series of the show, this time partnering with Mondo for a more modern 3D CG series.

On offer at this year's MIPTV, Aurora and Mondo expect the new series will appeal to new markets and expand the brand's already-wide appeal.

We talked with Aurora chairman and CEO H.Y. Noh about the third series of *YooHoo & Friends*, his company's partnership with Mondo TV and expectations for the new series.

Animation Magazine: *How will the new season of YooHoo & Friends be different from the previous seasons?*

H.Y. Noh: It keeps as its concept the green message, along with its already existing audience-friendly storytelling. The most significant difference in the new series is the upgrade of format to a 3D CGI series, while the previous two seasons are in 2D Flash. With this upgrade, we will try to approach a wider range of potential partners.

Animag: *Why did you choose to work with Mondo on this series?*

Noh: We were pleased to find Mondo TV has a similar philosophy and aspirations to ours, such as family-oriented values that deliver happiness to kids. We also wanted to take this partnership to maximize the global media exposure of the eco-friendly values in *YooHoo & Friends*, as well as licensing opportunities.

Animag: *Which company does the animation production on the series?*

Noh: As the property owner, Aurora World is in charge of preproduction, while Mondo TV covers postproduction. Both are engaged in main production.

Animag: *In which markets has the show had the most success?*

Noh: *YooHoo & Friends* has been very well received in Europe, where we have a strong retail presence and have had successful promotional campaigns, like a McDonald's pan-European Happy Meal promotion. We have especially seen substantial success in Germany, Turkey and Russia thanks to aggressive marketing activities put in place by our local partners.

Animag: *Which markets are you hoping to break into in the near future?*

Noh: With the new series, we expect to penetrate into the North American market. In addition, we will focus on knocking on the doors of the challenging, but high-potential Chinese market.

Animag: *How much collaboration is there between Aurora and Mondo on the series, both creatively and in areas like promotion and brand expansion?*

Noh: Aurora World is dedicated to developing concepts for characters for preproduction by leveraging our insights into the character industry, and it will focus on the licensing and merchandising programs globally. Mondo TV will be committed to the production and program distribution throughout its global networks.

Animag: *How has the success of the show affected sales of the YooHoo & Friends toys?*

Noh: *YooHoo & Friends* toy characters, which are based on rare or endangered species, has at its core the globally appealing concept of nature preservation, which has driven successfully sales of plush toys since its launch in 2007, apart from



the TV series. Up to now, 40 million units of plush toys have been sold globally, which means more than 16,000 units of toys are being sold every single day around the world. Of course, the TV series is one of the promotional tools to increase the brand awareness, but we believe the concept itself is valuable enough to gain the attention of consumers. We expect to further grow that exposure for the brand through multiple platforms when this co-production series is ready.

Animag: *Why do you think YooHoo & Friends has proven to be so successful?*

Noh: The eco-friendly concept and its message of encouraging kids to help preserve nature and animals are the keys to its success. These ecological values and assets will make *YooHoo & Friends* evergreen, we hope. ☺



CARTOONS AT CANNES: A GUIDE TO MIPTV 2015

Welcome to our Cartoons at Cannes listings for MIPTV 2015. We put together this guide to offer our readers a look at some of the shows that will be seen at the upcoming market in Cannes, France. To create this content, *Animation Magazine's* editorial staff put out an email call for participation. If your company is not included, it is because we either did not receive your response by our deadline or because you did not receive our initial email. To receive our email call for participation in our MIPCOM Guide for 2015, please contact Mercedes Milligan at mercedes@animationmagazine.net.

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4K Media Inc.

4kmediainc.com

Stand: R7.B12



Yu-Gi-Oh! ARC-V

Package: 49 x 30 (all markets except Asia)

Synopsis: Yuya Sakaki's dream is to follow in his father's footsteps and become the greatest "duel-tainer" in history – and he just might pull it off when he suddenly discovers Pendulum Summoning, a never-before-seen technique that lets him summon many monsters at once!

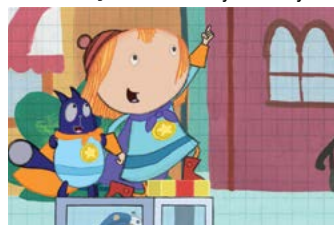
Type of Animation: 2D

Synopsis: The Kratt brothers leap into animated action as they travel to different corners of the world to get up close with amazing new animals.

Peg + Cat

Production Partners: Fred Rogers Co.

Created by: Jennifer Oxley and Billy



Aronson

Package: 80 x 12 (50 new episodes coming soon)

Target Audience: Kids 2-5

Type of Animation: 2D

Synopsis: A three-time Emmy award-winning preschool series that follows an adorable spirited little girl, Peg, and her sidekick, Cat, as they embark on adventures while learning basic math concepts and skills.

Get Ace

Production Partners: Galaxy Pop

Created by: Gian Christian and Dina



McPherson

Package: 52 x 11 (52 new episodes coming soon)

Target Audience: Kids 6-11

Type of Animation: 2D

Synopsis: A new animated series following nerdy high schooler Ace

McDougal, who's catapulted into adventure when he's accidentally fitted with some super cool, ultra high-tech, experimental braces.



Guess How Much I Love You - The Adventures of Little Nutbrown Hare

Production Partners: SLR

Created by: Sam McBratney

Package: 52 x 11 (26 new episodes coming soon)

Target Audience: Kids 2-5

Type of Animation: 2D

Synopsis: The animated preschool series *Guess How Much I Love You - The Adventures of Little Nutbrown Hare* is the first adaptation of the much loved bestselling picture book which has sold more than 30 million copies worldwide.

Animasia Studio Sdn Bhd

animasia-studio.com

Contact: +6012-3060803; edmund@animasia-studio.com



Chuck Chicken

Production Partners: Zero&One Animation Co., Agogo Entertainment, Neptuno Films SL

Created by: Animasia Studio

Package: 52 x 11

Target Audience: Kids 7-11

Type of Animation: 2D HD Digital

Synopsis: Golden Egg Securities is the No. 1 security service on Rocky Perch, a land filled with chaos, mayhem and birds – lots and lots of birds – and they offer around-the-clock protection from thieves and bandits. Their services are in great demand, since the island is also home to the world's pinkest criminal mastermind, Dr. Gringo, the Pink Flamingo, who is hell-bent on getting rid of Rocky Peak's newest hero, Chuck Chicken, to succeed in his evil plans.



ABC Monsters

Created by: Animasia Studio

Package: 26 x 22

Target Audience: Preschoolers 4-6

Type of Animation: 2D HD Digital

Synopsis: Twenty-six cuddly ABC Monsters live within the walls of Capital Castle, each representing a letter from the alphabet. Wonderfully curious, they wander off from Alphabet Garden to try new and fun things, but should any of the monsters go missing for longer than a day, all the letters will be wiped clean from every book in Capital Town. Alice, Brian and Cherry Berry must search for the missing monsters by following the clues from their Magical Dictionary.

Supa Strikas

Created by: Strika Entertainment

Package: 39 x 22

Target Audience: Kids 7-11

Type of Animation: 2D HD Digital

9 Story Media Group

9story.com

Stand: R7.K28



Wild Kratts

Production Partners: Kratt Brothers Co.

Created by: Chris Kratt and Martin Kratt

Package: 92 x 22 (26 new episodes coming soon)

Target Audience: Kids 4-8

Licensees: Wicked Cool Toys

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Synopsis: Follow the adventures of the world's greatest football team as they travel the globe in search of the ultimate prize: the Super League Trophy. With incredible characters, amazing locations and blazing on- and off-field action, the Supa Strikas face difficult challenges, heart-stopping adventure and blazing matches to reach their goal.



Harry & Bunny Show

Created by: Animasia Studio

Package: 78 x 7

Target Audience: Kids 7-11

Type of Animation: 2D HD Digital; Nondialog

Synopsis: Introducing Harry the magician; Bunny the stage rabbit; and Madam Penny, a Gypsy fortune teller. Harry and Bunny have a very close relationship, but they dislike each other sometimes. Every episode features the conflict between Harry and Bunny in their daily life, where Harry always constructs a new plan trying to get his magic wand back, while Bunny sabotages Harry with the magic wand. The plan will eventually backfire as Penny will punish Harry on what Bunny did, as she thinks it is Harry's fault.

Atlantica Entertainment

atlantica.com

Stand: R7.A20

Bat Pat

Production Partners: Rai Fiction, RTVE

Package: 52 x 11 (fall 2015)

Type of Animation: 2D HD

Synopsis: *Bat Pat* is a spooky animated adventure-comedy that proves the supernatural isn't always evil – just misunderstood. Bat Pat is joined by Silver siblings Rebecca, Leo and Martin, and a range of lovable creepy characters. Together with their winged companion, who has a terrible memory for supernatural facts, and with a keen nose for nocturnal mischief, the four best friends work to help the quirky Fogville town dwellers unravel the mysteries that lurk about. Balancing comedy and

action, the series is a spooky sitcom that maintains the fast-paced, quirky character humor of a traditional comedy mixed with some unexpected adventures.

Geronimo Stilton

Production Partners: RAI Fiction, France Television, M6 (seasons one and two), Superprod (season three)

Package: 78 x 23 (season three due fall 2016)

Type of Animation: 2D HD

Synopsis: Inspired by the popular book series of the same name, the animated series focuses on the life and adventures of the super-famous mouse journalist and head of the Geronimo Stilton Media Group. Together with his fearless nephew, Benjamin; his funny cousin, Trap; and his sister and daring special correspondent, Thea, they scour New Mouse City for scoops, traveling the world from exotic islands, to the frozen arctic and scary jungles! The third season will see many of his friends, old and new, returning for new journeys and locations.

Dive Olly Dive

Package: 104 x 11

Type of Animation: 3D CGI

Synopsis: *Dive Olly Dive* follows the fun-filled underwater escapades of Olly and Beth, two young research submarines-in-training that – under the guidance of Diver Doug – discover the marvels of Safe Harbour. Season two will take our subs into the vast and wondrous oceans of the world, where they will expand their training and will meet new friends under the watchful eye of Dr. Kate Daniels, oceanographer and underwater cultural heritage specialist. *Dive Olly Dive* has been selected by UNESCO as part of its new educational campaign to teach children and youths about the importance and beauty of the world's rich underwater cultural heritage.

Bolts & Blip

Package: 26 x 22

Type of Animation: 3D CGI

Synopsis: *Bolts & Blip* follows two central city misfits, Bolts and Blip, who accidentally find themselves as members of the Luna League's last-place team, The Thunderbolts, and are now out to show the fans what they can do. Both the Moon and the Earth are being threatened by Dr. Tommy's arch-nemesis, Dr. Blood. With the help of their rag-tag band of teammates, the two friends discover what they are made of, especially once they discover that not all is as it seems.

The Fixies

Package: 104 x 6

Type of Animation: 3D CGI

Synopsis: The Fixies is a unique blend of education, adventure, comedy and heart, all presented in a beautifully animated six-minute format. It follows the misadventures of 8-year-old Tom-Thomas

and his secret friendship with Simka and Nolik, the children of the Fixies family that lives in his apartment. There seems to be no end to the trouble these friends get themselves into with all the gadgets and appliances in their lives! Luckily the Fixies have the knowledge, skills and tools to figure out a problem and solve it in this funny and educational series about how things work. Each episode presents a kind-hearted, humorous and action-packed educational tale spun around one of the myriad of devices in Tom-Thomas' apartment.

Taka & Maka

Production Partners: Tik Tak Production, Techtonik, Giant Wheel Animation

Package: 40 x 1 (Europe, NorAm, LatAm)

Type of Animation: 3D CGI

Synopsis: The series relates the adventures and misfortunes of Taka and Maka, two crazy geckos who live in the same house. They are friends, but, to be honest, they're completely different from each other. One of them, Taka, likes living in a quiet environment and napping. He longs for peacefulness and relaxation, and he thinks that there is so much food at home that he is even weary of trying to catch moths. The other one, Maka, likes to create ingenious traps to catch them all. Of a hyperactive nature, he does not understand how sleeping can be more attractive than having fun and playing games. His favorite hobby is to tease his friends, because it makes him laugh and draws attention to himself. A simple comfortable house turns out to be a playground for them, with various and innumerable objects.

Dive Olly Dive and the Pirate Treasure

Package: 1 x 80

Type of Animation: 3D CGI

Synopsis: Submarines Olly and Beth join their friend Bobsie, who is convinced he is the great-grandson of the Rainbow "Pie-Rats," to search for the legendary secret treasure that reflects the beautiful rainbows in the sky. Their exciting treasure hunt is filled with wonder, comedy, thrills and adventure. But, they are followed by the unscrupulous Snarky Sharkskin and his slippery seahorse gang. As resourceful as ever, Olly and Beth manage to overcome all the problems they encounter, survive the storms at sea, make a heroic rescue, and find the glittering rainbow treasure. However, in the end, the treasure hunt leads them to understand that the best treasure of all is family and friendship.

CAKE

cakeentertainment.com

Stand: R7.D18



Woozle & Pip

Production Partners: KRO NCRV Youth

Created by: The Dream Chaser Co.

Package: 52 x 5

Target Audience: Kids 2-6

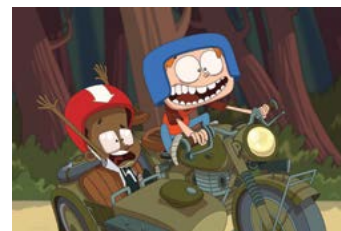
Licensees: Danone, Unilever and Universal Music

Type of Animation: 2D

Edebe Audiovisual Licensing

edebeaudiovisual.com

Stand: R7.F25



I Elvis Riboldi

Production Partners: Wuji House, Insomne Estudi, Tele Images

Created by: Javier Galán, Daniel Cerdà, Jaume Copons, Ramon Cabrera, Òscar Julve

Package: 52 x 11

Target Audience: Kids 6-10

Type of Animation: 2D

IMPS s.a.

smurf.com

Stand: R7.E64



The Smurfs

Production Partners: Hanna-Barbera, Lafig s.a.

Created by: Peyo (a.k.a. Pierre Culliford)

Package: 272 x 24

Target Audience: Kids, Family

Type of Animation: 2D HD

Synopsis: The Smurfs are cheerful little blue characters, no taller than three apples high, who wear white hats and white trousers. They live together in mushroom-shaped houses in the forest and have the most exciting and magical adventures.

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Student Artwork by Sophie Evans
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888.680.8691 // www.academyart.edu
Yellow Ribbon Participant

Kavaleer Productions

kavaleer.com

Contact: gary@kavaleer.com



Kiva Can Do!

Created by: Andrew Kavanagh

Package: 52 x 11

Target Audience: Kids 3-6

Type of Animation: 2D

LoriGali Group Holding

lorigali.com

Contact: Mobile +1 96 1336 5757



Nozi and the Water Warriors

Created by: Garen Koundakjian

Package: 26 x 22

Target Audience: Kids 6-12

Type of Animation: 3D

m4e AG

m4e.de

Stand: R7.H3



Mia and Me

Production Partners: Hahn & m4e

Productions, Rainbow, ZDF Enterprises

Created by: Gerhard Hahn, Hans Ulrich Stoeff

Package: 52 x 23

Target Audience: Girls 6-10

Licensees: Mattel, Clementoni, Simba Toys, IMC Toys

Type of Animation: CGI and live action

Synopsis: In season two of the international hit TV series *Mia and Me*, new adventures are waiting for Mia in Centopia. A new threat arrives at the island's shores, joining forces with an old foe, while Onchao sets out on a search for his missing father, Unicorn King Ono.



Tip the Mouse

Production Partners: Studio Bozzetto & Co., Giunti Editore, Studio Campedelli, Rai Fiction

Created by: Andrea Dami, Andrea Bozzetto

Package: 52 x 7

Target Audience: Preschool

Licensees: Simba Dickie Group

Type of Animation: CGI

Synopsis: Follow little Tip the mouse in his fascinating, daily adventures while walking the extraordinary path of growing up. The popular and internationally acclaimed children's book character stars for the first time in his own TV series.



Wissper

Production Partners: Absolutely Cuckoo

Created by: Dan Good

Package: 52 x 7

Target Audience: Girls 4-7

Licensees: Simba Dickie Group

Type of Animation: CGI

Synopsis: Wissper is a little girl who can talk to animals. She can sense their feelings and thus she can help animals around the world.



Atchoo!

Production Partners: Hahn & m4e Productions, Studio Campedelli,

Cartobaleno Animation Studio

Created by: Studio Campedelli

Package: 52 x 11

Type of Animation: 2D

Synopsis: This is the story of 8-year-old Teo, who sneezes when he is in an uncomfortable situation and – "atchoo!" – he turns into an animal.

Mondo TV S.p.A.

mondo-tv.com

Stand: P-1.M2 / P-1.N1



Bug Ranger

Production Partners: Animagic, MondoTV

Package: 52 x 11 (fall 2016)

Target Audience: Kids 4-9

Type of Animation: 3D CG HD

Synopsis: Best friends Squiggz, Cosmo and Flutter spend their time buggin' on down the boardwalk of life. For this trio, every day is the first day of summer and every night is filled with carnival lights and excitement.



Atomicron

Production Partners: Giochi Preziosi, Mondo TV

Package: 52 x 13 (fall 2015)

Type of Animation: 3D CG HD

Synopsis: The center of the Universe is the contact point between the world of matter and the world of antimatter -- the limit between good and evil, which hides the cosmos' biggest mystery: microscopic planets engaged in the biggest, smallest battle of all time.



Little Suzy's Zoo

Production Partners: Suzy's Zoo Film Partners, TBS

Created By: Suzy Spafford

Package: 26 x 2

Type of Animation: 3D CG HD

Synopsis: Witzzy the fluffy duckling and his friends Boof the teddy bear, musical bunny Lulla, calico giraffe Patches and chenille elephant Ellie Funt are charming stuffed animals come to life who go on magical adventures through the world around them.

The Treasure Island



Production Partners: Rai Fiction, Mondo TV

Package: 26 x 26 (fall 2015)

Type of Animation: 3D CG HD

Synopsis: Inspired by the book by R.L. Stevenson, this adventure series is told through the diary writings of Jim Hawkins, recalling his topsy turvy life with the notorious Billy Bones.



Sissi the Young Empress

Production Partners: Il Sole die Carta, Mondo TV

Package: 26 x 26 (fall 2015)

Type of Animation: 2D HD

Synopsis: Sissi, the charming young Empress of Austria and well loved historical figure, is reimagined as a modern personality in this new adaptation of her life which focuses on her young life and her relationships with her large family and lover, Franz.



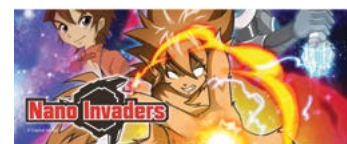
Cat Leopold

Production Partners: Mondo TV, Russian Mobile Television LLC

Package: 13 x 13 (fall 2015)

Type of Animation: 2D HD

Synopsis: Kindly Leopold the cat lays a trick on his two hooligan mouse pals, sending them off to find an alleged treasure. When the treasure is actually discovered, the unlikely trio befriends the ghost trapped in the chest.



Nano Invaders

Production Partners: Capital Media Production

Package: 52 x 26

Type of Animation: 2D HD

Synopsis: Young Hikaru is dragged into a series of battles between two rival alien clans when he tries on a bracelet that transforms him into a monster. Turns out his classmate Mimi and her family are on a special scouting mission from the planet Anima, and need Hikaru to help them fend off invaders from the planet Damon.



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The Drakers

Production Partners: Ferrari, Mondo TV
Created By: Based on Racing Championships; screenplay by Fabio Diranno

Package: 26 x 26 (fall 2015)

Type of Animation: 2D HD

Synopsis: Formula Kids drivers Chris and Fabri compete for the Drakers racing team, driving their cars through the X-Racer remote control capsule. Thanks to their X-TAB, they can communicate to their racing cars and travel through space to race in locations all over the world.

Nottingham Forest

nottinghamforest.es

Contact: Laura Garcia Ortega, Head of Int'l Sales & Licensing, laura.garcia@nottinghamforest.es



Sendokai Champions

Production Partners: Kotoc, TVE and

Planeta Junior

Created by: Kotoc

Package: 52 x 12

Licensees: Simba

Type of Animation: CGI HD

One Animation

oneanimation.com

Contact: carlene@oneanimation.com



Oddbods

Package: 20 x 7

Target Audience: Kids 4-9

Synopsis: Each with their own distinct personality, the seven adorable Oddbods appeal to both children and adults. Every episode celebrates the odd in everything, where seemingly ordinary situations are given a humorous twist, and everyone has fun along the way.

Starz Worldwide Distribution

starzglobal.com

Stand: R9.A32



Dan Vs.

Production Partners: Film Roman

Created by: Dan Angel, Matt Danner,

Lizbeth Velasco, Jay Fukuto

Package: 53 x 30

Type of Animation: Flash

Synopsis: Dan is a loveable cynic who, along with his reluctant sidekick Chris, haphazardly seeks revenge against the frustrations of modern life that – whether in reality or in his imagination – conspire against him.

Studio 100 Media

studio100media.com

Stand: R7.C1

Blinky

Package: 52 x 11

Target Audience: Kids 5-7

Synopsis: Without Blinky, who is a bundle of energy, the town of Green Patch would be a quiet refuge from the dangerous outback. With this kid koala, everyday life has a way of spiralling into a chain of escapades.



Nils Holgersson

Production Partners: Studio 100

Animation SAS

Created by: Jan Van Rijsselberge & Cyril Tysz; based on the novel by Selma Lagerlöf

Package: 52 x 13

Target Aud.: Kids

Types of Animation: CG with 2D elements

Synopsis: Reckless and daring Nils is quite a rebel against authority. One day a mischievous elf changes Nils into a miniature human with the skill to speak with animals. With his faithful friend, Martin the gander, Nils embarks on the most extraordinary journey among the wild geese.



K3

Production Partners: Studio 100

Animation SAS

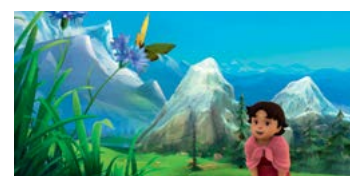
Created by: Alan Gilbey

Package: 52 x 13

Target Audience: Kids 6-8

Type of Animation: 2D

Synopsis: Kim, Kylie and Kate are three ordinary girls in an extraordinary world; teen pop singers on an amazing global tour of unexpected diversions, which lead to fun packed stories. Sweet and cheeky, bright and breezy, K3 always triumphs with a positive attitude and a catchy song.



Heidi

Production Partners: Studio 100

Animation SAS & Flying Bark Productions

Created by: Jan van Rijsselberge,

Christel Gonnard

Package: 39 x 22

Target Audience: Kids 5-8

Type of Animation: CGI 3D

Synopsis: Eight-year-old orphan Heidi lives with her grandfather in the scenic Swiss Alps. Being a true ray of sunshine, she wins the hearts of everyone around her. Together with her best friends, Peter and Clara, Heidi learns to embrace and appreciate the wonders of life in nature.

Viacom International Media Networks

nickelodeon.com

Stand: R7.N7

Blaze and the Monster Machines

Created by: Jeff Borkin (*Team Umizoomi*) and Ellen Martin (*Bubble Guppies*)

Package: 20 x 30; 1 x 60 special

Type of Animation: CG HD

Synopsis: The action-packed series features the adventures of Blaze, the world's most amazing monster truck; his driver, an 8-year-old boy named A.J.; and their adventures in Axle City. Whenever there's trouble, everyone turns to Blaze for help because they know he can do things no other truck can!

VIZ Media Europe

vizeurope.com/en

Stand: P-1.F61

Yo-kai Watch

Production Partners: TV

Tokyo, Dentsu

Created by: Level 5

Package: 65 x 30

Target Audience: Kids 6-12

Licensees: Hasbro

Type of Animation: 2D



ZDF Enterprises GmbH

zdf-enterprises.de

Stand: P-1.L2 / P-1.M1

Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs

Production Partners: SLR Productions

Package: 52 x 11 HD

Target Audience: Preschool

Type of Animation: 2D



Blinky

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PREVIEW
AT MIPTV 2015
R7.C1

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The View from Venice

Cartoons on the Bay focuses on the toons of Israel, while celebrating the past and future of the U.K.'s iconic Thunderbirds. By Tom McLean.

Few places are as idyllic as Venice, which is perhaps why it's the ideal real-world locale from which to let animation launch a voyage from historic Israel to fictional Tracy Island of *Thunderbirds* fame.

The 18th edition of Cartoons on the Bay, set for April 16-18 in the iconic Italian city, continues its tradition of exploring the depths of animation from all corners of the world.

Israel is the guest country of this year's festival, with the Pulcinella Career Award going to Albert Hanan Kaminski, director of the 1995 animated feature *The Real Shlemiel*, based on a novel by Jewish Nobel Prize-winning writer Isaac Bashevis Singer.

Born in Brussels in 1950 to a Jewish family, Kaminski moved at age 20 to Israel, where he worked on a farm community and began studying graphic arts. A graduate of the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem, he also studied at the Rijksakademie of Amsterdam and produced in 1981 his first short, *The Pink and the Grey*.

In the early 1980s, he began working in Israeli children's programming and began a long cooperation with the Children's Television Workshop that saw him develop an Israeli and a Palestinian version of *Sesame Street*.

Living in Paris in the 1980s, he worked on many TV series and was mentored by famed French animator Paul Grimault. The suc-

cess of *The Real Shlemiel* led him to direct more features and TV series, including *Pettson and Findus*. He lives in Tel Aviv and is working on a new feature, titled *Being Solomon*.

Kaminski will serve on the international jury at Cartoons on the Bay, along with special effects artist Sergio Stivaletti of Italy; American visual-effects artist Anthony LaMolinara; RAI Com president Costanza Esclapon; and Sophie Boé, head of children's co-productions and presales for Canal Plus in France.

The competition will present honors in eight categories: TV series for preschoolers, TV series for children, TV series for tweens, educational and social work, TV pilot, advertising and promotional work, interactive animation and short film. More films, including an Italian preview of *The Book of Life*, will screen out of competition.

Additional special awards will be given for best character, best European work and best soundtrack.

The professional program offers three

days of panels, presentations and awards, and will open the proceedings with a screening of *Nyosha*, an animated short film from Israeli filmmaker Liran Kapel.

Other presentations range from a

look at women in animation, licensing, and animation in Italy to company-specific spotlights from Toon Boom, Nickelodeon, ITV Studios,

Mad Entertainment and Cartoon Network.

The program also offers the Pitch Me! contest. This year's event will be juried by director Guido Manuli, director Roberto Recchioni and writer Cinzia Leone.

The conference will present additional honors to Graphilm Entertainment, as Italian Studio of the Year; DreamWorks Animation and ITV Studios each will be honored as International Studio of the Year.

Receiving Pulcinella Special Awards this year:

- **Sylvia Anderson** is best known to animation fans as a voice artist, producer and costume designer on the many iconic British animated series she created with her husband, Gerry Anderson, including *Thunderbirds*, *Supercar*, *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons* and *Stingray*. She most famously voiced Lady Penelope in *Thunderbirds*, which is being relaunched this year as a CG-animated series from ITV Studios.

- **Marty O'Donnell** is an American composer, audio director and sound designer best known for his work on the video-game franchise *Halo*.

- **Anthony LaMolinara** is a visual-effects artist who won an Oscar for his work at Sony Pictures Imageworks on *Spider-Man 2* and was nominated for an Oscar for work on *Spider-Man*. He also worked as an animator on the original *Toy Story*.

A trio of art exhibitions will run through the festival: Boom Boom, from Graphilm Entertainment; 50 Years of Thunderbirds, from ITV Studios; and Leo for Expo 2015, from Gruppo Alconi.

For more details on Cartoons on the Bay, visit www.cartoonsbay.com.



Albert Hanan Kaminski



Anthony LaMolinara



Sylvia Anderson



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The Essential Guide to FMX

Deep explorations of the top visual-effects and animated movies mark the German event's 20th anniversary. By Tom McLean.

If you're searching for a peek at the tech behind the top visual-effects and animation blockbusters of today and tomorrow, the 20th annual FMX conference in Germany is the best place to start.

Set for May 5-8 at the Haus der Wirtschaft in Stuttgart, the multifaceted conference is offering in-depth looks into this year's Oscar winners *Interstellar* and *Big Hero 6*, and is sure to have one of the hottest tickets in the industry with an early look at the rendering in *Finding Dory*, Pixar's highly anticipated 2016 sequel to *Finding Nemo*.

FMX's programming will explore a broad range of topics from state-of-the-art creative achievements to the best opportunities in the business. For the organizers, such programming is both representative of FMX's mission and a celebration of 20 years of contributions to the fields of visual effects and animation.

"FMX has sought to offer an international platform for the industry

to reflect its achievements and losses, and – above all – the opportunities that the future holds," says FMX program chairman Jean-Michel Blotti re, who is responsible for the overall composition of the program. "At FMX 2015, we therefore assemble luminaries that have contributed to FMX over the years and we look to the new innovations in the realm of immersion and virtual realities, the two intertwined themes that are already changing every aspect of film and media production worldwide."

As in previous years, attendees can continue these conversations at the concurrent Animation Production Day, set for May 7 and 8, presented in partnership with the Stuttgart Festival of Animated Film, which itself is running May 5-10.

Here's the lowdown on the must-see events at FMX and its related events.



Stuttgart International Festival of Animated Films

The best local and international animation will be on display for the Stuttgart International Festival of Animated Films, running May 5-10.

More than 1,800 films were submitted for the festival, which is offering more than 50,000 euros in prizes in its competition categories, which include: International Competition, Young Animation, Tricks for Kids – Shorts and Tricks for Kids – Series.

Among the highlights are the Oscar-nominated British short *The Bigger Picture*, and local films such as *Nuggets*, by Andreas Hykade; *Wrapped*, by Roman Kälin, Falko Paeper and Florian Wittmann; and *Chocolate Darwin*, by Patxi Exequiel Aguirre and Kiana Naghshineh.

Additional highlights include: the Arab Animation Forum, connecting filmmakers from Germany and Arab nations; a focus on this year's guest nation, Spain; and an animation and comics program.



Concept Art

Production designer Patrick Hanenberger sets the stage for creature designer and concept artist Terryl Whitlatch, who realized creature designs for *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace*; and concept artist and character designer Chris Appelhans, who has designed on films such as *Coraline*, *Monster House* and *Fantastic Mr. Fox*.

The Fine Art of Animation

Susanne Marschall and Rada Bieberstein of the University of Tübingen curate a set of presentations that explore the idea of animation as fine art, spanning an arc from art history to 3D.

Animation Production Day

The only German market dedicated to animation, Animation Production Day has joined forces with Cartoon – European Association of Animation Film to qualify the top three presentations for participation in Cartoon Forum.

The move is designed to promote German production efforts at the conference, which will present 30 to 35 handpicked animation projects during its day and a half of programming.

This year's event also adds a new half-day event called Producers Meet Producers. Aimed at animation producers, service producers and production service providers, this event focuses closely on the creation and production side of animation projects. The event offers one-to-one meetings in a relaxed atmosphere, providing opportunities to meet potential national and international coproduction partners.

The meat of the event is the APD Conference, which features case studies of groundbreaking projects and content briefing sessions that allow broadcasters and distributors to explain their current programming requirements.

Complementing the program are lunches and dinner events that provide additional networking opportunities.

Animation Wild 'n Strange

Get wild and artsy as Andreas Hykade of the Filmakademie Baden-Wuerttemberg seeks out independent talent from all over the world.

Eye Candy

Shelley Page, the head of international outreach at DreamWorks Animation, introduces her personal animated favorites from the last two decades.

Lighting and Rendering

Longtime FMX program board member Christophe Hery of Pixar Animation Studios illuminates the trend for custom renderers in production in 2015 with help from:

- Oliver James of Double Negative, who explores Christopher Nolan's science fiction epic *Interstellar*, detailing the creation of wormholes using the company's relativistic ray-tracer.
- Brent Burley of Walt Disney Animation Studios, who speaks about the new Disney renderer, Hyperion, which was used for the first time in *Big Hero 6*.
- Luca Fascione of Weta Digital, who describes how the studio's physically-based production renderer, Manuka, was used in *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* and as the full production renderer on *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*.

And Craig Welsh of Animal Logic showcases the renderer that was put together for the 2014 hit *The LEGO Movie*. His talk is complemented by Philipp Slusallek of Saarland University, who sheds light on his team's work on the development of a real-time ray tracer as part of the EU-funded project *Dreamspace*.

European Animation

Cartoon Saloon's Fabian Erlinghäuser will detail the production of Oscar nominee *Song of the Sea* across five different European studios, with an emphasis on character posing and character animation. And Tom Barnes of Aardman Features will explain the hurdles that had to be overcome to successfully realize the British production *Shaun the Sheep Movie*, released at the beginning of this year.

Marketplace Exhibitors

- Cut & Paste
- Digital Production
- Golaem
- HDR Light Studios
- HP
- Kolor
- Laubwerk
- pixeltrain
- Toon Boom Animation
- Wacom

Recruiting Hub

- Animal Logic
- Double Negative
- eder visual.content.producing
- Framstore
- Illumination Mac Guff
- InnoGames
- Mackevision Medien Design
- Method Studios
- The Mill
- MPC
- RISE FX
- ScanlineVFX
- Trixter



Panning For Gold

Tips on how animation and visual effects professionals can get the most out of the broadcast-centric tech on display at NAB. By Todd Sheridan Perry.

The National Association of Broadcasters Show is focused heavily on broadcast technology, offering some 1,700 exhibitors to see in the relatively short span of four days – April 13-16 – at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

So, the question for people who work in animation or visual effects is how to boil it down to bypass the booths with network switchers and news van broadcast antennae and focus on the stuff that matters?

Your primary stops should be the big guys: Adobe (booth SL5030), Autodesk (booth SL3317), Maxon (booth SL10405) and The Foundry (booth SL6329). All of them should be making pretty big announcements at the show, and this is typically the time of year that Autodesk releases the most-recent update to its Media & Entertainment Suite.

Maxon had some exciting announcements back around SIGGRAPH, but they usually have very well-structured and informative demos. And The Foundry is going to be touting Nuke Studio hard because of its integration into a broadcast-centric pipeline.

Software tools for artists are probably going to be next on your list. Here are a few things to check out that can make your toolset more robust:

- BorisFX (booth SL4225) recent-

ly acquired Imagineer Systems – the award-winning developer of the planar tracker, Mocha – so it will be making a big deal about that, on top of its huge libraries of effects for compositing.

- RE:Vision Effects (booth SL5807) will be revealing GPU acceleration for Twixtor and Reel Smart Motion Blur, which is available for most of the primary compositing tools such as Nuke and After Effects. We are retiming stuff all the time nowadays, and if something can help speed that up, then it's definitely worth checking out.
- I'm intrigued by ThatStudio (booth SL6106). They have a suite of effects and editing tools, but they also have a countdown on their website with the statement, "Something amazing is coming ..." So, color me curious.

Other software developers to visit are mainly plug-in developers and such. Digital Anarchy (booths SL6005, SL6105) is the home of Knoll Lens Flare and Beauty Box – both staples in the visual effects artist toolkit.

Rampant Design Tools (booth SL5706) provides a crazy amount of stock clips of film and light effects at 2K, 4K and 5K. Thinkbox Software also will be there, talking about the new version of its render manager, Deadline,

and Sequoia, a point-cloud mesher that is still in beta. But, you'll have to make a special trip to their hospitality suite in the Renaissance Hotel.

For those of you who want to invest a bit more in your craft – or just like cool toys – there are a number of hardware exhibitors with some technological advances.

The most-recent addition from Blackmagic Design (booth SL219) is Digital Fusion – which I guess is just called Fusion now. The company made waves by releasing a free version to the masses to be used for personal or indie level projects. I'm sure their booth will be pretty busy between that, the capture cards, the cameras and their DaVinci Color Grade suite.

Lightcraft Technology (booth C6746) is all about optimizing workflow on productions, especially for very time constrained ones like for television. They have camera tracking systems, real-time compositing systems, and 3D rendering – all bundled into a package called Previzion. If they do have something setup at the show, the amount of technology working hand in hand is a wonder to behold.

As a seeming answer to Previzion, Motion Analysis (booth SL2428) has evolved its motion-capture technology into a CamTrak solution to not only provide real-time compositing,

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Tech Reviews



by Todd Sheridan Perry

Thinking Particles 6

I'm a little late to talk about Thinking Particles 6, which was released by Cebas back in October. The release is a major step up toward getting all of your simulation needs into one system. Thinking Particles has always been known for its rigid-body solutions and has been used to great effects by facilities like ScanlineVFX, Pixomondo and Uncharted Territory on projects like *2012*, *Battleship*, *Man of Steel* and *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*. In other words, it's production tested.

With Thinking Particles 6, the most exciting addition is a Smoothed Particle Hydro method to solve for water and fluid effects. Bringing this into the package means that water can react to rigid bodies, which can react to the water. Additionally, the bullet-solver has been enhanced, including soft-body simulation as well as updated spline controls for dynamic splines – like ropes.

This is all fabulous stuff. But more recently, Thinking Particles has moved into the subscription world, making it more accessible to artists and studios. The original price for Thinking Particles was \$1,795 – a deal, in my humble opinion, for what it does – and then a \$660 upgrade for each major release.

The new subscription model is \$660 a year. And what you get is continual enhancements and new features as they become available, which can be automatically updated. Well, automatically available for update. If you are in the middle of a show, you don't want your

software to update without your consent (I'm looking at you, Windows).

Users have already benefited from this as Cebas has released its first subscription “drop,” which includes powerful curve tools for procedurally modeling with particles and some crazy additional controls to the internal volume breaker to get fractures away from that dreaded Voronoi curse.

This subscription model is now established and here to stay. For as many arguments as there are from developers, there as many upsides for the user base. It expands accessibility and keeps the software current and provides a tighter feedback loop from artists in actual production. In an industry where technology changes as quickly as white papers are published, a two-year development cycle means that when you release, you are already behind. The subscription model keeps the software on that leading edge.

Tiffen's SteadiCam Curve

I know, this doesn't seem like a very “animation” centric product, but it kind of is. As filmmakers, we have new equipment coming out every time you turn around. So sometimes tools like this may just help make your next viral video shot on a GoPro.

The SteadiCam Curve by Tiffen is a gimbaled counter-weight system designed to be used with GoPro Heroes. While it's not as fancy as a full-blown SteadiCam, it functions in a similar fashion. The handle separates your own

motions from the camera – adding a buffer of sorts. This gives the camera a much more fluid motion. This is important for animators because we want to try and avoid all that shaking and jittering, especially with the notoriously Jell-O-y rolling shutter of a GoPro.

I found the setup to be incredibly easy and I was up and running in minutes. But don't expect to be a pro just because you have a new toy. Like anything, the control of the Curve takes a bit of practice and a lot of finesse. The touch is delicate, so like those posture exercises for etiquette where we see women walking with books on their heads, the Curve wants some grace from the user. Once you get it down, there is no comparison between the footage from a straight handheld GoPro and one mounted on a Curve.

If you like to incorporate your visual effects into live-action footage, but don't have access to a full-app DSL or Red or something, the cost of entry with a GoPro isn't bad. And if you already have a GoPro, you can find the Curve for as low as \$80.

Full disclosure: GoPro footage isn't ideal for visual-effects work, but once you get the hang of the foibles, it is great for found footage visual effects.

Todd Sheridan Perry is a visual-effects supervisor and digital artist who has worked on features including *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *Speed Racer* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. You can reach him at todd@teaspoonvfx.com.

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but also object tracking at the same time.

And then there is SGO (booth SL3825), which I am not too familiar with, that offers a product called Mistika, which is a control surface and software for color grading. Another product is a node-based compositing system called Mamba FX. The reason why I bring it up – and why you should visit the booth – is because I like the idea of lesser-known companies that have products that challenge more established tools. It's competition that drives innovation.

Lastly, for the very math-minded of us, swing by the Academy of Motion Arts and Sciences booth where they will be talking about their Academy Color Encoding System that is starting to become the industry standard for color pipelines in film postproduction.

Definitely try and get around the floor as much as you can. There are lots of toys to look at. And who knows? Maybe you'll see something that sparks your imagination and you can see how that something made totally for something else could help you and your aspirations. So, treat this as the highlight hit list, but don't forget to look around at the other sites on the way. ☞





Animation Blooms in the City of Roses

The largest toon-centered event in the United States brings the Northwest Animation Festival – its biggest show ever – to Portland and Eugene, Ore.

The Pacific Northwest has earned a reputation both stateside and abroad for a vibrant creative community, welcoming attitude and less-than-ideal weather. But as Portland, Ore., celebrates its third year as home to the largest animation-focused festival in the United States this month, the region is looking to claim another sobriquet unrelated to any *Portlandia* skits.

This year marks the fifth annual Northwest Animation Festival (nwanimationfest.com), running May 4-10 in Portland with encore screenings May 15-17 in Eugene. The week-long event at the historic Hollywood Theatre will screen 176 films – and, for the first time, features, including Cartoon Saloon's *Song of the Sea*. The shorts were selected from more than 1,400 submissions from roughly 60 countries by an international jury connected by a built-from-scratch system.

"Much of our success stems from a decision to let filmmakers submit their work for free," says festival director Sven Bonnichsen. In year three, NWAF moved to a hybrid system with a free "early-bird" submission period followed by a fee-required period. Despite the addition of fees, that year saw the amount of films submitted increase by three and a half times the previous year's, necessitating the worldwide, hundred-person jury. "Everything we do has this do-it-yourself ethic."

Bonnichsen, who in founding this home-grown festival has perfectly melded his experience working with local nonprofits and his passion for stop-motion animation, was initially inspired by 2007's Platform event. A lack of funding shut down Platform after its triumphant debut as the largest animation festival in U.S. history. "I've approached (NWAF) as if it were a grass-roots political campaign: building up our community of indie animation

artists and enthusiasts one person at a time."

This year's event, the biggest ever, will kick off with three days of guest shows, retrospectives and specially curated selections. On Thursday, the Northwest scene will be celebrated with the Oregon Animation Industry Showcase, which will spotlight Portland-area studios like Bent Image Lab and local freelancers. Friday through Sunday will offer immersive, four-hour marathon screenings of international shorts, and the weekend's afternoons will be split between Saturday's "Family Friendly" program and the ever popular "Strange & Sexy" show on Sunday – the perfect Mother's Day treat for the rugrat-free set.

"We approach creating this festival with the idea that it is foremost being produced by animators for the benefit of other animators ... We want to share the best work of our peers with the broader audience of animation enthusiasts, and then go even further, enticing the general filmgoing public," says Bonnichsen. "Animation is one of the youngest art forms – festivals are a crucial part of capturing its history as it happens."

Though the volume of responses means Bonnichsen has had to share the wealth by bringing in industry-savvy jurors to narrow down the programming, he still makes an

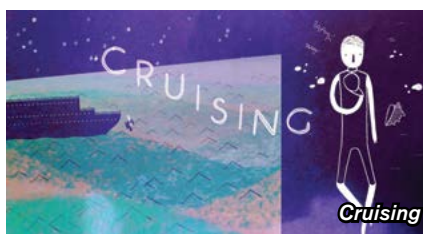
effort to watch every film that comes in. This year, he's noticed the increasing influence and artists' mastery of digital painting techniques in 2D animation. He's also noticed a pretty cynical thematic trend among filmmakers worldwide. His must-see picks?

"The genius of the best filmmakers is in finding a plausible exit out of impossible situations.

Beach Flags by Sarah Saidan does this in a very literal way, telling the story of a young Iranian lifeguard who helps a peer escape an impending forced marriage.

"Other films make an impossible departure by breaking the rules of naturalistic illustration and storytelling. *Cruising* by Zachary Zezima, for instance, tells a basically mundane story about a young man who feels sensory overload while walking through the crowd of passen-

gers on a cruise ship. Yet, with an overlay of psychedelic colors and abstractions, the telling becomes a mesmerizing exercise in synesthesia. As always, it is a delight to find films like this that can *only* be told via animation." ♦



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License to Grow

Licensing Expo moves into the digital space and more global markets for its 35th edition, set for June 9-11 at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center in Las Vegas.

The hottest place to do business this summer will be Las Vegas, with the return of the Licensing Expo to the Mandalay Bay Convention Center June 9-11.

Celebrating its 35th edition this year, Licensing Expo expects more than 15,700 retailers, licensees, manufacturers, distributors and licensing agents to attend from more than 90 countries. More than 5,000 brands will exhibit, and more than 150 new exhibitors are slated to attend this year.

Kicking off the event is the Opening Night Party, a major networking event for the industry that will feature a performance by Fifth Harmony, an all-female vocal group formed on the second season of the reality competition series *The X Factor*.

The Characters and Entertainment Zone of the show floor features booths representing brands from such well-known animation companies as Aardman Animations, DreamWorks Animation, The Jim Henson Co., Masha and the Bear Ltd., Paramount Pictures, The Pokemon Co. Intl., Tezuka Productions, Toei Animation Co., VIZ Media and Zag America.

Owned and organized by UBM Advanstar and sponsored by the International Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association (a.k.a. LIMA), Licensing Expo this year expands its presence into both the digital space and into more international markets with new programming and features.

With more than one-third of show attendees now coming from outside the United States, Licensing Expo has increased its international focus to deliver a more global experience for both exhibitors and attendees.

Brands from more than 35 countries will be represented on the show floor. For 2015, Licensing Expo will host new pavilions and in-

creased representation from countries including Mexico, India, China, Japan and the United Kingdom.

These new international exhibitors join a growing list of global companies and featured pavilions that include Brazil and Korea, with China and Japan significantly expanding their footprint at the 2015 show.

Held in conjunction with LIMA's Licensing University, the Digital Media Licensing Summit is a first-of-its kind program that creates a bridge between the manufacturers and retailers of licensed products and the world's most suc-

cessful and popular digital-media companies and stars.

The inaugural summit features exhibitors from the digital content world, as well as a full day of programming on June 8, which features a number of keynotes and panels focusing on new business opportunities that leverage the tectonic shift in young consumers' media habits toward digital platforms and stars.

Discussions with high-level stars and executives will explore the future of licensing in multiple categories.

All of these programming elements and exhib-

its were specifically created to bring these two worlds closer together, and foster the development of new licensing partnerships.

The conference features an opening keynote panel focusing on the future of retail. Panelists include Dow Famulak, president of Global Brands Group; Lisa Harper, CEO of Hot Topic; Mike Fitzimmons, CEO of Delivery Agent;

and Richard Barry, executive VP and chief merchandising officer for Toys R Us. Marty Brochstein, senior VP of LIMA, will moderate.

Licensing University offers everyone from newcomers to industry veterans the chance to dig into topics such as "How Kids View Brands Globally ... and Locally," "Royalty Rate Trends" and "Tapping into the Power of the U.S. Hispanic Consumer." The program runs over three days and requires purchase of a Licensing University pass at registration.

Details on registering for or exhibiting at Licensing Expo can be found online at www.licensingexpo.com.



The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles patrol the Characters and Entertainment Zone at last year's Licensing Expo, while the Minions, below, pose for a picture with a new friend.



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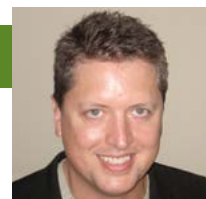
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Autonomous Animator

By Martin Grebing



Double Your Independent Income Now

Three easy-to-implement strategies can have an immediate, positive impact on your earnings.

As an independent animator, there is no limit to your potential earnings, if you have the right plan. On the other side of the coin, however, if you are just starting out or struggling, you may not know where your next paycheck is coming from or when it may arrive. Being independent provides the unique opportunity to have complete control over your goals, plans and destiny, so it's your personal and professional responsibility to make them amazing.

Instead of eking by, scrambling to pay the bills and accepting any and every toxic client that comes your way just to try and make ends meet, how would it feel to boost your profits by 20 percent? Fifty percent? What about doubling your income this year?

Once you break down the apparent enormity of doubling your income into simple concepts, you will realize it's much more attainable than you thought, involves somewhat obvious strategies (once realized) and requires only simple math equations. Believe it or not, in some cases doubling your income may not even require additional work. This being the case, what's holding you back? Here are three simple approaches that you can start now:

Option one: Double your rates. This may sound obvious if not impractical, but you may be surprised how much more money quality clients are willing to pay above and beyond what you think they are willing to pay. Most independent professionals undercharge their services because they think it increases the chance of landing more projects. What this does in actuality is overload you with small projects and cheap clients that will try to nickel and dime you to death, thereby keeping you overwhelmed producing work at cut-rate prices. Doubling

your rates overnight for existing long-time clients will certainly cause unfriendly waves, so the best approach for this option is to send notice to your existing clients of a future rate increase (test the waters, but I suggest keeping the increase mild, under 25 percent), while doubling your rates for all new clients.

For example, one of my clients who had been running a moderately successful business for over 10 years made absolutely no changes other than doubling his prices and he achieved record sales that very same year and, more importantly, record profits. He offered the

amount of money you will need to pay independent contractors to produce the additional work and increase the target number of additional projects you will need to land to compensate for this expense.

Again, this approach may sound fairly obvious, but so few people ever come to this realization, set this specific goal or put it on paper.

Option three: Hybrid approach. This is probably the most realistic and feasible approach for those of you who commit to doubling your income this year. Your plan will more than likely involve a blend of option one and op-

tion two. If you already are making a very hefty rate for your work, I would recommend focusing more on option two than option one. If you already are overloaded with more projects than you can handle, I would strongly recommend focusing much more on option one than option two. In this case, it might benefit you greatly to purge some of the high maintenance/low-paying clients in your roster and seek only new, professional clients that are more than

happy to pay your new rate.

If you are serious about skyrocketing your earnings as an independent, choose an option listed above, plug in your own numbers, commit to it and don't look back. Breaking this goal down into simple steps and even simpler math, you may find that doubling your income is easier and more attainable than you ever imagined.



exact same product and the exact same service, doubled his prices, doubled his earnings and even gained more new clients than he lost.

Option two: Double your projects. If you produce twice the amount of projects without raising your rates, you will double your income. To do this, you can either pitch and land twice as many projects with your current client list, or you can land twice as many new clients. In reality, this option will probably end up being a mix of the two – more projects with existing clients plus acquiring new clients.

If you choose to double your projects, keep in mind that you will also need to double your labor to cover the new projects. If this is more than you can handle alone, subtract the

Martin Grebing is an award-winning animation writer/director/producer, small business consultant and president of Funnybone Animation, a boutique studio that produces animation for a wide range of clients and industries. He can be reached via funnyboneanimation.com.

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A.I. Meets Animation

Image Engine innovates multiple techniques to create the intelligent robotic star of director Neill Blomkamp's *Chappie*. By Bill Desowitz.

In his most-recent sci-fi actioner, *Chappie*, South African director Neill Blomkamp returns to his *District 9* roots in Johannesburg to focus on a broken police robot who becomes sentient thanks to an ambitious inventor, played by Dev Patel.

As always with Blomkamp, there's a political subtext. In this case, it's about humanizing humanity, which has become too violent and oppressive.

The movie was adapted from the director's 2003 short about an autonomous robotics company that has replaced law enforcement in South Africa. Blomkamp thought it would be cool to link the design of Chappie back to the short. And because he wanted the robot to be anthropomorphic, he envisioned it designed in a cost-effective way for law enforcement so it could fire weapons, go through doors and drive cars. However, the 'bots – or "scouts," as they are called – have to be taken seriously by criminals and at the same time be empathetic to viewers.

Thus, Chappie posed an interesting animation challenge for Image Engine.

Although they considered performancecapture on Blomkamp's favorite actor, Sharlto Copley, who voices Chappie, they decided that it was too expensive and time consuming to suit the director's filmmaking needs. Instead, the actor donned a gray suit on set and the animators hand-animated on top of him, in what Image Engine VFX supervisor Chris Harvey calls "the poor man's" mo-cap.

"He is in all the plate photography with the other actors, then we removed him and replaced him with the digital Chappie," Harvey says. "It was his being on set and acting like any actor would, in a gray suit, and then we took that back to Image Engine and the animators basically just had him in the background and fully hand key-framed on top of it to match his performance. The other thing we did was we were able to use it as an incredibly accurate lighting reference by sticking the same gray material in the computer as a calibration to make sure that the lighting we put on our digital Chappie really matched what was on set."

An Early Start

Image Engine got involved in the build of Chappie in collaboration with Weta Workshop six to eight months before the shoot, which is pretty unusual because the practical build usually drives the digital build.

"In this case, it was a little bit different," Harvey says. "Neill had some concept art for Chappie, but then he gave that to us and we fleshed that out in three dimensions, well before Weta had to build the practical model. The reason we did this was it allowed Neill to play with it digitally and to make quick changes, but also one of the important things was that the movement felt like Sharlto's performance. We needed to make sure

er scout 'bots and the gigantic Moose 'bot have much more rigid movements because they are not A.I.-driven like Chappie.

In terms of the toolset, Image Engine used Maya for animation, ZBrush for modeling, Nuke for compositing and Houdini for VFX along with a lot of proprietary look-development and rigging software.

Going Gangster

A key moment is called the "real gangster" scene, in which Chappie mimics the cool strut of a thug (Ninja Visser from the South African rap group Die Antwoord), who takes possession of Chappie and uses him to commit heists.

"It was a really fun scene to do because Chap-

pie goes through quite a large evolution in the film," Harvey says. "He starts out as a police robot, but then he wakes up like a toddler and becomes alive. He's young, he's curious and he doesn't understand the world yet. He's jumpy about things. But as he progresses, he learns. By the time we get to the gangster scene, he wants to fit in with his family. He wants to be one of the gang. And Ninja teaches him how to be cool,

and so this becomes a transitional scene, where Chappie starts to pick up his gangster walk and some of the arm movements and head twitches.

"We also got a great body performance from Sharlto. He did a number of things to help and asked to put on these shorts and we stitched them on so he could get that gangster gait. He really understood it was going to be a team effort and even visited the facility and talked with the animators, so he was very aware of the work that didn't come until afterward. He was also asking if his performance was too much or too little. We also enhanced some of Sharlto's head performance, exaggerating twitches and other movements to get a better emotional read."

Bill Desowitz is owner of Immersed in Movies (www.billdesowitz.com), a regular contributor to Animation Scoop at Indiewire and author of *James Bond Unmasked* (www.jamesbondunmasked.com).



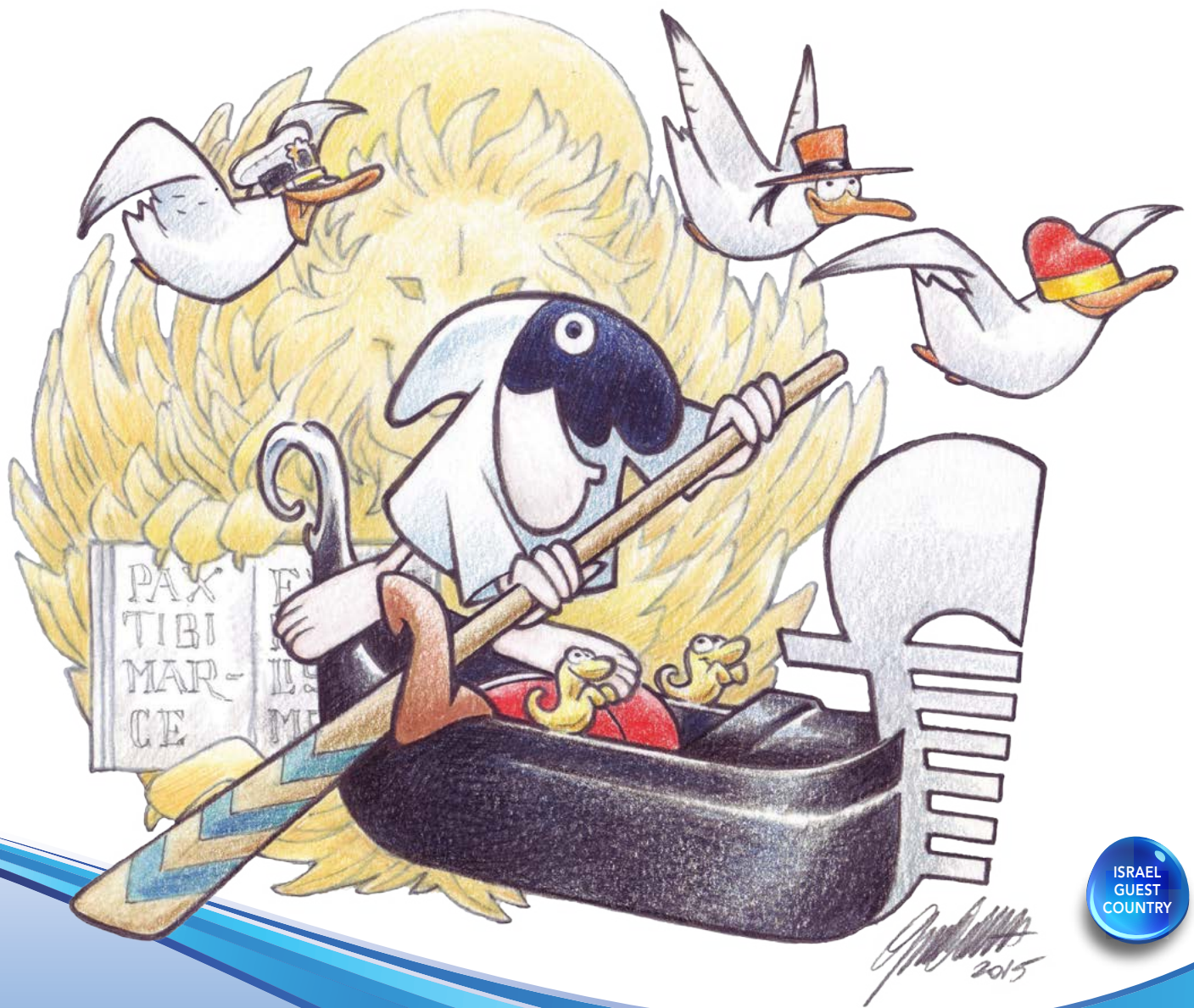
that Chappie's 'physiology' could line up very well to Sharlto's. So body proportions, joint placement made it a lot easier to mimic his performance and translate well onto the robot.

"In addition, we spent a lot of time working out the physical mechanics of Chappie. He's built without any cheats because we worried about pulling the audience out of his believability. And so Neill didn't want to use ball joints. He wanted to use known, mechanical systems that were all very familiar, so all of his joints are complex, single axis, rotational; and so we built a complicated hierarchy of jointing and rigging for his body. That was somewhat automated so that everything would properly move and bend by the animators. When we did finally get Sharlto's performance, we would properly match that."

Apparently, if you look at Chappie closely and study Copley, he moves like the actor, but it's still a natural, mechanical movement. It became a creative balancing act. On the other hand, the oth-

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Playing Fairy Godmother

How MPC conjured up the magic for Disney's live-action *Cinderella*. By Mercedes Milligan.

The break-out success of last year's *Maleficent* was merely the prow of Walt Disney Pictures' latest feature film juggernaut: live-action takes on the studio's animated fairy tale classics. On March 13, family audiences turned out to theaters to give the new *Cinderella* a No. 1 opening, and were treated to a colorful update filled with visual-effects enchantments.

Directed by Kenneth Branagh, the film stars Lily James as gentle-hearted orphan Ella, who is tormented by her cruel stepmother (Cate Blanchett) and stepsisters. Things get critical when she meets the handsome Kit (*Game of Thrones*' Richard Madden) and hopes to see him at the royal ball. With the help of an ingenious Fairy Godmother (Helena Bonham-Carter) and some plucky critters, Ella gets a once-in-a-lifetime chance to make her dreams come true.

On board from the beginning was the crew at MPC Film's Montreal studio, which coordinated with the production team from previz through shooting in London to postproduction. "Kenneth Branagh was adamant that we kept a nice, classic look and feel, so that was always



something we were aiming for – this idea of a saturated, colorful landscape, a romanticized version of England," says MPC visual effects supervisor Patrick Ledda. "At the same time, we were a little bit inspired by the original cartoon and a lot of Disney films, but we wanted to have our own stamp on it as well."

A Girl's Best Friends

A good chunk of *Cinderella*'s 500-plus VFX shots involve the heroine's pint-sized CG animal pals. Digital butterflies, birds and a majestic stag all make appearances, but the key critters are those recruited for Ella's ball

entourage: skittering lizards, a quartet of mice and a busybody goose. MPC relied on proprietary tools built on top of Maya to lend personality to these realistic characters.

The mice – the cartoon's portly Gus Gus and his family – especially required some finesse, according to Ledda. They needed to strike a balance between a photorealistic appearance, while at the same time being anthropomorphic and expressive enough to believably interact with Ella in dozens of shots. The crew

pored over hundreds of reference materials, and even brought real rodents to the set at Pinewood Studios to gauge lighting interactions.

The film's scene stealer is definitely "Mr. Goose," a white gander who pops up in many scenes for a brief comedic cameo.

"Mr. Goose became more and more of a character, it was always kind of a joke that the movie was about him," Ledda says. "The artists and animators here had fun with it. ... With a goose, it already has kind of funny movements and gait, and you can play with it, how it moves its neck and wobbles without having any facial expression."

Waving the Magic Wand

The hands-down most complex work, both technically and creatively, was developing and animating the various creature (and pumpkin) transformations when the Fairy Godmother gets Ella ready for the ball.

"We wanted to keep it funny and exciting. Sometimes with these transformations they can look a little creepy, and we were very aware of this issue," says Ledda. "The hardest was the mice turning into horses. We did

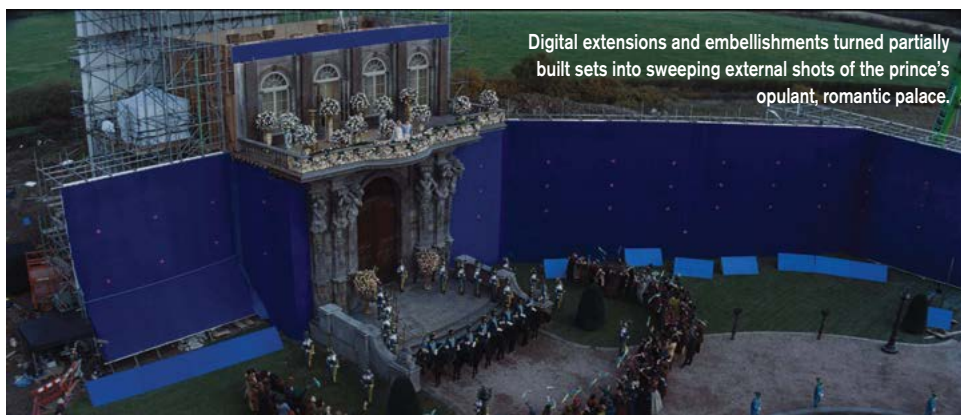
hundreds of tests, took months and months developing ideas. ... We had to do lots of revision. Kenneth wanted to do something quick and snappy, and liked the idea that the mice were excited about becoming big white horses and helping Cinderella."

The transformations offered plenty of creative comedy moments – from beautiful white horses sporting oversize mouse ears to a temporarily goose-beaked carriage driver. The lizard morphs into a respectable footman

MPC went through several iterations to strike a balance between a photorealistic look and readable expressiveness for Gus and his mouse family.



Digital extensions and embellishments turned partially built sets into sweeping external shots of the prince's opulent, romantic palace.



by first sprouting a hat and shoes before his scaly skin ripples and folds into fabric as he grows and takes on a human form. Crucial in all these mutations was a specially developed fur system that gave the animators tons of control over the sequences and used a three-rig progression to calculate what kind of hair or fur should appear on the changing model.

How to turn a pumpkin into a sumptuous, giant Faberge egg of a carriage also challenged the MPC team's creative limits. Ledda points out they went through multiple iterations of the sequence, which in the finished film has the pumpkin growing out of control until it bursts the entire greenhouse in a blast of magic. "Kenneth said, 'It has to be something a kid watches and remembers the rest of their life.' And I was like, OK, no pressure then!"

In addition to the proprietary fur system, MPC also had to come up with tools that would help handle the load of generating tons of lush trees and greenery for the outdoor scenes, took its first stab at using ray-tracing on hair and used in-house solutions built on top of Maya, Katana and Nuke for animation, lighting and rendering.

Fit for a Princess

Since the film was shot almost entirely on indoor sets, MPC was also tasked with creating fully CG exterior shots – such as the massive staircase and starlit gardens outside the royal palace – plus digital set extensions for key locales like Ella's house (which got an extra couple of stories). The vast majority of wide shots were primarily CG. Ledda estimates the studio created about 80 CG assets for *Cinderella*.

One of the more interesting challenges involved the hallmark of the fairy tale: the captivating glass slipper. While the film crew and cast did have a practical prop to work with, the slipper built for this was too small for star Lily James to wear, so Ledda and his team had to create a digital one.

The VFX supe points out that the refracting, reflective and iridescent qualities of the crystalline material presented difficulties in cobbling the CG shoe. Likewise, keeping the size of the shoe consistent and making sure it was large enough to fit Ella's foot without making it too big or different looking from the original prop required special attention. "A few shots with the prince holding the shoe, we had to replace the prop shoe. Every time you see (Ella) putting on the shoe, it's fully CG. We also had to change the performance of the hand of the prince (to match up with the CG shoe) – some pretty complex work there."

A Dandy of a Letdown

Irreverent new series from Shinichiro Watanabe lacks the depth of character he brought to the likes of *Cowboy Bebop*. By Charles Solomon.

Space Dandy: Season 1

FUNimation: \$69.98; Blu-ray/DVD 4 discs

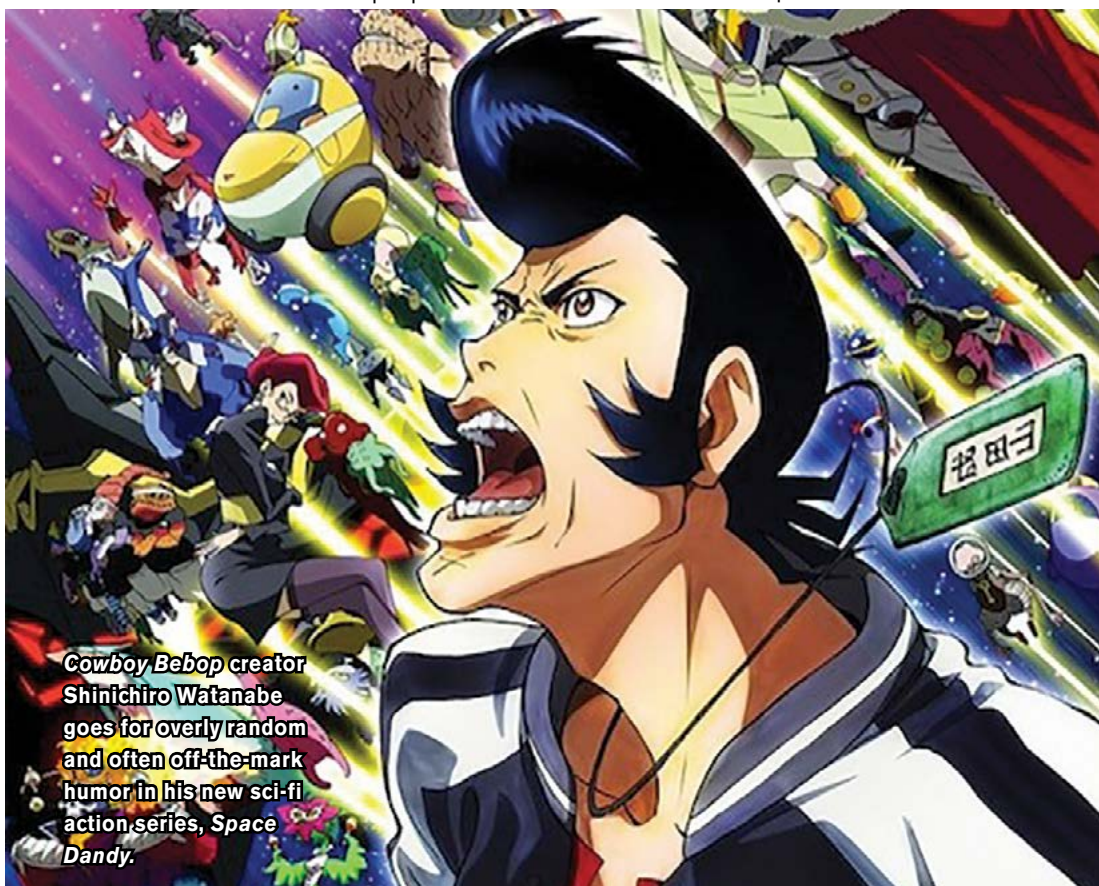
It was probably inevitable that Shinichiro Watanabe's *Space Dandy* (2014) would disappoint some fans. The premise of an anti-hero/bounty hunter in space feels a bit too close to his celebrated *Cowboy Bebop* (1998). Although it sounds similar in outline, *Space Dandy* is very different from *Bebop* – and Watanabe's other works – in look, style and content. The show is an odd amalgam of fan service jiggle shots, offbeat adventures and slapstick comedy, devoid of the brooding *film noir* tone of the earlier series.

Like Spike Spiegel in *Bebop*, Space Dandy (Ian Sinclair) is a perpetually broke loner, traveling through space in a small, ramshackle ship, the *Aloha Oé*. But he's a much cartoonier figure, with strange platform boots and an out-sized pompadour a '50s pop star would envy. His misfit crew consists of QT (Alison Viktorin), a fussy, outdated robot; and the Betelgeusian Meow (Joel McDonald), a feline alien who's none too bright (holograms fascinate him the way laser pointers intrigue house cats). When they can get the ship's equipment to work, they visit distant star systems, hunting unknown alien species for the bounties. But Dandy prefers to spend his time at Boobies, a chain of "breastaurants" featuring pneumatically over-endowed waitresses.

There's no sustained story line, just random mini-adventures that have nothing to do with each other. Episode one ends with Dandy and his crew being vaporized by an explosive doll he's kept as a last resort weapon. In episode four, the crew of the *Aloha Oé* – and the entire population of the universe – are turned into zombies. This usually grisly transformation creates a surprisingly tranquil existence for every-

one: Zombies move slowly and when they consume yogurt, they turn unexpectedly gentle. Dandy and Meow visit a planet of intelligent, mobile plants in the oddly touching episode nine, which Watanabe wrote. Dandy's intellectual host realizes his people have evolved in

murderous boss with radically differing world views. If Sentaro in *Kids on the Slope* is the school bad boy, it's because society has rejected him as the product of a then-scandalous relationship between his American G.I. father and Japanese mother.



Cowboy Bebop creator Shinichiro Watanabe goes for overly random and often off-the-mark humor in his new sci-fi action series, *Space Dandy*.

ways they were never meant to: He reverses the process and returns them all to their original, non-sentient forms.

The brilliant, saturated colors and often cartoony designs suggest one of the nuttier episodes of *FLCL* or *Gurren Lagann* re-imagined by the artists who created *Yellow Submarine* – or vice versa. *Space Dandy* makes a shelf of Easter Peeps look downright drab.

Dandy lacks the compelling characters that have always been Watanabe's trademark. He's created dynamic action sequences in several series, but what made them memorable was his talent for showing the man behind the action. Spike's face-off with Vicious at the end of *Bebop* is more than a gunfight: It's a duel between a formidable renegade and a

Watanabe has often mixed anachronistic elements into an outrageous but seamless whole: Mugen's blend of martial arts and hip-hop moves or the Tokugawa homeboys who tag Hiroshima Castle to the delight of an Andy Warhol caricature in *Samurai Champloo*. The cast of *Bebop* watches a daily TV show where a cowboy/cowgirl team announce the latest bounties on criminals.

Dandy is irreverent, impetuous and a would-be womanizer. But he's shallow and superficial. He lacks the core that gives depth to hot-tempered characters like Mugen or Sentaro. Although it's often funny, this weakness at the center of the series keeps *Space Dandy* from being memorable in the way so much of Watanabe's previous work has been. ☹

Rock 'Em-Sock 'Em Spring Discs

March and April releases are all about action, with **Batman vs. Robin**, **Stone Age Smackdown** and **Harlock** leading the charge. By Mercedes Milligan.

Batman vs. Robin

[Warner, \$19.98]

The latest entry into the DC Universe Animated Original Movie canon pits the dynamic duo against itself in this action-packed adventure from director Jay Oliva (*Batman: Assault on Arkham*, *Justice League: War*). Reckless young hero Robin, a.k.a. Damian Wayne, is following in the footsteps of his Dark Knight dad, but when he encounters a

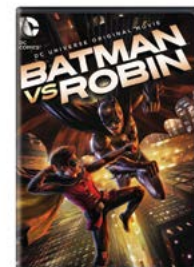
mysterious figure called Talon, who introduces him to the shadowy world of the Court of Owls, it will set him on a dangerous path that could change his destiny forever.

Based on the *Court of Owls* comic arc and scripted by J.M. DeMatteis (*Teen Titans Go!*, *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*), *Batman vs. Robin* features the voices of Jason O'Mara as Batman, Stuart Allan as Robin, Jeremy Sisto as Talon, David McCallum, Sean Maher, Grey DeLisle-Griffin, Robin

Atkin Downes, Peter Onorati, Kevin Conroy and "Weird Al" Yankovic as Dollmaker. The Blu-ray version (\$24.98) offers exclusive featurettes *Gotham City's Secret: The Mythic Court of Owls* and *The Talons of the Owls*, as well as audio commentary and four bonus cartoons from the DC vault.

Both BD and DVD have a sneak peek at the upcoming *Justice League: Gods and Monsters*.

[Release date: April 14]



The Flintstones and WWE: Stone Age Smackdown

[Warner, \$19.98]

Everyone's favorite prehistoric cartoon hero gets a little more primitive in this original feature-length franchise mashup. When Fred Flintstone loses his family's vacation money, he comes up with a hare-brained scheme to rake in the clams: be-

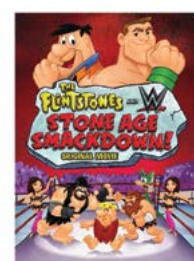
come a sports entertainment promoter and throw Barney into the ring with the likes of rock-hard wrestlers John Cena, Stone, Marble Henry and the Undertaker.

In addition to animation voiceover veterans Jeff Bergman, Kevin Michael Richardson, Tress MacNeille and Grey Griffin, WWE characters lending their talents to the spoofy smackdown are Brie and Nikki Bella, Daniel Bryan, John Cena, Mark Henry,

Ray Mysterio, CM Punk, Undertaker and Mr. McMahon.

Directed by *The Looney Tunes Show* duo Spike Brandt and Tony Cervone, this Stone Age spectacle offers plenty of laughs and is accompanied on DVD and BD by *The Superstars of Fred Flintstone Entertainment*, and *How to Be a Stone Age Superstar* featurettes and two bonus cartoons.

[Release date: March 10]



Harlock Space Pirate

[Ketchup Ent., \$20.99]

Shinji Aramaki's 21st century update of the anime and manga classic is yours for the taking this month. Produced by Toei Animation and directed by the master behind *Fullmetal Alchemist Brotherhood*, *Halo Leg-*

ends and *Appleseed Saga: Ex Machina*, the feature-length adventure follows the mysterious space pirate of the future, Captain Harlock, who is determined to return his death ship and loyal crew to a battered Earth, declared off-limits by the intergalactic Gaia Coalition. The rogue captain comes up with an incredible plan to go back in time to rescue

Earth, but that involves destroying everything that currently exists. A young Gaia Coalition soldier infiltrates Harlock's ship, but soon discovers things are not as they seem. The DVD includes the original Japanese film and English dub, which is voiced by David Matranga, Emily Neves and Rob Mungle.

[Release date: March 31]



Adventure Time: Frost & Fire

[Warner, \$19.82]

Cartoon Network has assembled another cracking collection of Finn the Human and Jake the Dog's adventures in the Land of Ooo! For your viewing pleasure, the re-

lease boasts nearly three hours of sizzlin' hot and super cool content, with 16 popular episodes from Pendleton Ward's hit series. Culled from multiple seasons are "Frost & Fire," "Earth & Water," "Jake the Brick," "The Prince Who Wanted Everything," "Something Big," "Return to the Nightosphere,"

"Daddy's Little Monster," "Joshua and Margaret Investigations," "Davey," "The Pit," "Freak City," "Memories of Boom Boom Mountain," "James," "Time Sandwich," "Apple Thief" and "Thanks for the Crabapples, Giuseppe!"

[Release date: March 3]



Uncle Grandpa: Good Mornin'

[Warner, \$14.97]

And following closely will be Cartoon Network's second volume featuring everyone's favorite animated uncle and grandpa! Pete Brownardt's magical comedy was re-upped for a third season earlier

this year, so if you've fallen behind now's the time to catch up on Uncle G's adventures with his oddball friends Pizza Steve, Mr. Gus, Belly Bag and Giant Realistic Flying Tiger.

With an assortment of 12 surreal selections to choose from, you're sure to have a good mornin' with this release – no matter

the machinations of Aunt Grandma, Moon Man or Moustache Monster. Keeping with this month's pro-wrestling theme, included is mockumentary episode "The History of Wrestling," guest starring Ric Flair and revealing the story of the nuttiest wrestling match to ever happen.

[Release date: April 7]



Honorable Mentions:

The Legend of Korra: Book Four - Balance

March 10

[Paramount, \$19.99 DVD

| \$35.98 BD]

Paddington

April 28

[Anchor Bay, \$29.98]

Scooby-Doo and Scrappy-Doo: The Complete Season 1

April 28

[Warner, \$19.97]

Teen Titans Go! Appetite for Disruption

April 14

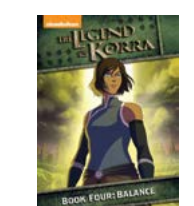
[Warner, \$19.97]

Tinker Bell and the Legend of the NeverBeast

March 3

[Disney, \$29.99 DVD |

\$36.99]



Action Fairy

Steve Loter brings an action sensibility to the fairies of Pixie Hollow in *Tinker Bell and the Legend of the Neverbeast*. By Tom McLean.

Steve Loter has a reputation for action and adventure when it comes to animation.

With a credit list including shows like *Kim Possible*, *American Dragon: Jake Long* and *Buzz Lightyear of Star Command*, it may come as a surprise to see his name attached to a film series featuring Disney's beloved fairy Tinker Bell.

We interviewed Loter on what attracted him to directing *Tinker Bell and the Legend of the Neverbeast* to begin with and what his approach was in bringing his particular style to the well-known characters and world while still staying true to what they are.

Animation Magazine: What attracted you to the *Tinker Bell* project and how did you come to be the director of it?

Steve Loter: I got called in by Disney Studios, and initially I thought I was being called in for an action-adventure because that's kind of my background. But when they mentioned they wanted me to work on a fairy story, I was intrigued because they were interested in putting my own stamp on the franchise and following through on my vision on what this story should be. So I was really excited to be able to open up *Tinker Bell* and the world of Pixie Hollow to a more action-adventure, cinematic sensibility than it had been previously.

Animag: What were some of the challenges in cracking the story and making it work as something that you could animate into a film?

Loter: I think that we always knew the story that we wanted to tell and the theme and the morals we wanted to tell. But that didn't mean that there weren't complications down the line. I think one of the biggest challenges we had was animating Gruff, the Neverbeast, be-

cause if we didn't get him right then the whole film would of kind of fall apart because you wouldn't have believed him or the relationship. And Gruff is an interesting character because he's comprised of a lot of familiar elements you may see in other animals.

Animag: When you were animating Gruff, did you just look at the reference of all these animals or did you come up with a unique way for this one animal to work?

Loter: Choosing material is a really import-

of lose a real-world connection to that animal.

Animag: In terms of maintaining consistency, did you work on this film where certain people worked on the creature, or worked by character, or was it sort of being split up and passed around by sequence or scene?

Loter: Well, we were really fortunate because one of the story artists, Ryan Green, unbeknownst to me when I hired him on board, was an animal biologist. So I sat down with him and we talked about all kinds of muscle structures and basically all kinds of deep-dive animal biology stuff. And though all the story artists absolutely contributed to Gruff, Ryan was absolutely a go-to guy for some animal specifics.

Animag: Did you have any sort of difficulties squeezing Tinker Bell in or finding an arc that worked for her amid everything else?

Loter: Well, Tinker Bell as a character is Fawn's best friend. So it was good to be able to kind of explore Fawn's personality and just really take her to places and have Tink kind of be the barometer of good or at least Fawn's point of reference of moral correctness or the right way to go. And Mae Whitman as Tink, I



Tinker Bell and her fairy friends meet Gruff in Disneytoon Studios' *Tinker Bell and the Legend of the Neverbeast*. Below, the scout fairies take seriously their job as protectors of Pixie Hollow.



ant thing. So we did a ton of research on every animal that was connected to Gruff in any way and even some that were not just to see if there were habits that we could kind of incorporate. But I made the decision pretty early on to not make him anthropomorphic because I feel like when you've got an animal that's standing on two legs and is singing and dancing, you kind

mean, she's a staple. It was also an interesting facet of her role as Tink because it wasn't the same character. It was slightly different. It was a character that was more worried, a little more concerned. So it was an interesting turn for Mae to be able to kind of go into a different zone with Tink, a character that she knows very, very well. ♦

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